The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

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Jack Finegan: Too Good to Be True?

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James R. Blackwood • How Long Is a Day?

Franklin F. Beach • Traitors to Ourselves

DUANE L. DAY • SENSE OR CENSOR?

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Lenten Meditations

LENT is here again. What shall we make of it? To many in our secularized world Lent will be just like any other time of the year except that Easter will call for some new finery or whimsy of bunnies or Easter eggs. To others Lent is a prompting to some mild (or acute?) self-discipline such as giving up candy or smoking for six weeks. To our Roman Catholic friends and to some Protestants it will mean going to church more frequently. In the early centuries of its observance, it was the season when converts from paganism were instructed in the Christian faith and made ready for baptism on Easter Eve, and those Christians who had lapsed into paganism were prepared for readmission to the fellowship of the church. It may well mean this in our time. Yet deeper than any other meaning in the Lenten season is its reminder of our Lord's suffering "for us men and for our salvation" and his eternal presence with us as the Risen Christ. Our day does not need this message more than every day has needed it, for ours is not the first time of sin, anxiety, inner tension and outer turmoil among men. But we are more keenly aware of the darkness that engulfs us. To find light from beyond our own wisdom we would do well to pray daily the prayer of Alcuin from the eighth century: *O eternal Light, shine into our hearts. O eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil. O eternal Power, be thou our support. Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance. Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us. Grant unto us that with all our hearts, and minds, and strength, we may evermore seek thy face; and bring us, in thine infinite mercy, to thy holy presence. So strengthen our weakness that, following in the footsteps of thy blessed Son, we may obtain thy mercy, and enter into thy promised joy. Amen.*—Christian Century, *Feb. 7, 1951.*

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ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—Collect for Ash Wednesday, Book of Common Prayer.

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HOPE and fasting are said to be the two wings of prayer. Fasting is but as the wings of a bird; but hope is like the wing of an angel, soaring up to heaven, and bears our prayers to the throne of grace. Without hope, it is impossible to pray; but hope makes our prayers reasonable, passionate and religious; for it relies upon God's promise. Prayer is always in proportion to our hope, zealous and affectionate.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

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LENT, from the Anglo-Saxon *lencten,* the lengthening of the days, brings also a lengthening of thought for "those of the Way" everywhere, the yearly indrawing of the mind of Christendom as it contemplates anew the life of one who could speak as God: There is no death! During Lent the church, which seeks to save itself through works most of the year, makes an intrepid effort to checkrein its attention galloping to the earth's four corners long enough to dismount from the driver's seat and seek a solitude for pondering. . . .—Christian Century, *Feb. 22, 1950.*

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Memo:

AS I was saying when those initials so rudely interrupted last month's Memo, musical forms and values have homiletical significance. There is, for instance, a rough usefulness in the classification of sermons according to musical types. Who does not know, who has not on occasion preached a Prelude? You know what I mean: the sermon that was all beginning. You had a big thesis to state, and plenty of material for its development, but somehow you never got there. The gimmick that was to get you into your subject developed its own fascination, demanded more and more words and sentences and paragraphs until time was suddenly run out and the main theme never made it at all. Or if it did, it was only to be kissed off at two minutes to twelve.

That is how some series are born. I know. You let the prelude stand as that Sunday's introductory sermon and get to the central theme on subsequent Sundays. But that just doesn't go. There are not enough Sundays in any ministry so that even one can be limited to leading up to the real thing. Every sermon has to arrive, has to go to the center of things, has to work out the big issues.

Least of all dare we fob off a sermon-length introduction on a congregation. For introductions are rightly our own best, brightest ideas for getting into a subject. But real sermons can never be built on our own best, brightest ideas. Whole sermons are, instead, a troubled engagement with the Word which stands in judgment on all our best, brightest ideas. Any sermon, any theology which evades that engagement is all prelude. The answers it gives are all in question; the solutions it offers are apt to be restatements of the problems. Prelude sermons, prelude theologies: all overture, no opera.

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Musicians who write preludes frequently compose Etudes, too. Not so among sermonizers. The etude preacher will be quite another man than the prelude preacher. Etudes are studies, whether played or preached. Dull or flashy, they are full of the finger exercises appropriate to the discipline. For the pianist, this will mean arpeggios, staccato chords, consecutive thirds. For the preacher, the exercises run more to higher criticism, systematic theologies, literary lore. But in either case it is the heavy home work, the preparatory exercises that are brought right into the performance.

The etude sermon gives prominence to J, E, D and P and thinks nothing of ringing all the changes on the documents any Sunday morning; or it fingers at length the numbers of Isaiahs or the authorship of II Peter; or it plays around with the various theories of the atonement, a la Aulen; or it bats agape and eros back and forth to Nygren's beat; or it ransacks a poet's life, of course picking a poet of pulpit propriety. The etude preacher is the not-so-crypto teacher; he confuses profess-er with professor. He preaches from a notebook.

Let's not be thrown off by these program notes. No one is suggesting that the minister does not have an enormous educational obligation to his congregation. The preacher has a teaching job to do and he ought everlastingly to be making opportunities for doing it: classes, midweeks, organizations' dinner meetings—you name it. And sermons ought to be full of facts. But the sermon is not a lecture, a study, an etude. It is not about anything in the world but God and people (*you* and the rest) and what they have to do with each other. Use that twenty minutes to read a paper to the congregation and you may have shot the best chance you will have that week to do what you are ordained to do. Finger exercises are hard to take from the instrumentalist; from the preacher they are almost criminal.

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Need anything be said about the Impromptu? This is the dashed-off little opus full of the marks of its haste. The musical impromptu will work very hard to sound that way: careful composition calculated to sound extemporaneous. The sermonic impromptu is the extempore trying desperately to sound carefully composed. It bespeaks overfamiliarity with the congregation and no knowledge at all of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has much more to do with the long haul than with the spasm. Irregular female mystics have oversold the abrupt, ecstatic action of the Spirit. Earth-bound regulars like preachers and editors will do better to count the Spirit in as steady glow on the steady grind. The Spirit will rescue the perishing but you underrate it if you think it stands by to cover up for the unconcerned. Impromptus are not its forte.

Last month I just got rolling when these initials stopped me. So that Memo turned out to be a Prelude. I'm still not where I've been trying to get: to those positive suggestions which come to homiletics from musical form. Which means, I guess, that this Memo will have to stand as an Intermezzo Coda coming up.

T. A. G.

By Duane L. Day

SENSE OR

FROM his pulpit in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Francis Cardinal Spellman, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, condemned the motion picture *Baby Doll*, written by Tennessee Williams and directed by Elia Kazan. Cardinal Spellman's remarks included these comments, "In solicitude for the welfare of souls entrusted to my care . . . I exhort Catholic people to refrain from patronizing this film under pain of sin." Immediately the press services relayed the cardinal's comments to newspapers all over the country. Some newspapers, in their stories of the condemnation, carried a statement from a representative of Warner Brothers maintaining that the cardinal had not seen the film. This statement was neither confirmed nor denied by the cardinal's staff.

The very Reverend James Pike, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York city, made some comments of his own regarding *Baby Doll*. These remarks too were picked up by the press services and many newspapers headlined Dean Pike's words in such a way as to make it appear that the Episcopal Church was opposing the Roman Catholic Church on the matter of *Baby Doll*. Apparently, however, the burden of Dean Pike's remarks was this: *Baby Doll* is not a very significant movie, not especially good literature, and therefore not worth all the furore it is causing. In his sermon, Pike went on to raise some questions about Roman Catholic censorship.

Well, what about *Baby Doll?* Is it worth all this fuss? Is it significant? Can a Christian see it without sinning?

Problem of Contemporary Literature

Baby Doll cannot be judged by itself, for its problem is the problem of contemporary literature. Looking at almost any single example of today's literature, one is forced to ask these questions: Is it fruitful for an author to deal with the subject of moral degradation? Can a Christian individual be part of the audience of such literature?

To answer these questions one must see them in historic context. It is traditional to say that our country was founded by people searching for religious freedom. The Puritans were, in fact, partisans of a religious controversy in the Churches of England and Scotland. Their name signified that they desired to purify the church. This desire was expressed in many behavioral ways: Among other things, certain ecclesiastical vestments were opposed, hymn singing was viewed as unworthy of a Christian, the readings of novels and the attendance at plays was thought to smack of frivolity. It is a caricature of Puritanism to say that it was opposed to anything which gave pleasure; nonetheless, it is a caricature which was decisive. To this day there is a not insignificant portion of our population which views as not-quite-worthy the reading of novels and the attendance at plays or movies.

Surviving Influence of Puritanism

Thus though Puritanism as a movement withered and died, Puritan morality gained a significant and long-lasting victory. This was a victory which has touched many segments of American society and most aspects of American religious life. Today, when conscious adherence to Puritanism's moral code has been thrown off, a residue often remains. We may be able to verbalize that reading novels and attending dramatic performances is a legitimate usage of time, but even as we do so, we may feel guilty that we are not doing something "useful." This feeling is heightened when the literature itself appears to break the Puritan code.

Thus, from church leaders and from others as well, one frequently hears cries today for more "Christian" literature. The dominant themes of hate, guilt, infidelity and sexual perversion in modern literature are viewed with great alarm. I will grant that it is refreshing to pick up a novel or witness a play or read a story which does not have depraved morality as its single theme. But a frank appraisal of much so-called Christian literature would have to say that it is simply harmless. Seldom does it speak about real flesh and blood people, deal with real history, or depict real life situations; and consequently it leaves its audience unmoved, unchallenged and hence uncommitted.

What then does the bulk of contemporary literature do? For one thing it tells us of real life. The problems which are presented by the Arthur Millers and the Robert Penn Warrens and the William

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CENSOR?

ulkners are problems which are honest appraisals the life patterns of contemporary man. To be re the characters in these men's works sin, but so real men sin. The Bible speaks of sin honestly d frankly. The church has no right to ask that e modern writer turn his back on the sin of the rld or pretend that it does not exist in order to oduce a work which conforms to some precon-ived standard of "wholesomeness."

The second thing which contemporary literature es is that it involves us. It does this precisely be-use it is true to life. Writing over twenty-three ndred years ago, Aristotle in his single work of erary criticism, *The Poetics*, spoke of this matter terms of catharsis. He maintained that one's own ul could be purged by watching others caught in e web of life and either healed or destroyed by rcumstances. This is a principle which today's thors understand, perhaps better than authors any other era. It may be uncomfortable to behold e struggles of another man, and these struggles ay in themselves be immoral; but there is thera-utic value for us in watching the struggles of e characters of modern literature, as our own uls purged of the very qualities which we deplore these characters.

Life, and death, are the raw material of the au-or. Without becoming involved in all the prin-ples of literary criticism, it would seem that in dging an author's work, his audience may legiti-ately ask two questions: (1) Is the work believ-le, that is, true to some facet of the life being rtrayed? (2) Do we agree with the solution to the e problems which the author has posed—or, if solution is suggested, do we agree that a lack of ution is inevitable?

Responsibilities of Authorship

It is at this last point that contemporary litera-re is most vulnerable to criticism. Though the odern author portrays life realistically and in such vay as to involve his audience in the problems he ses, seldom does he face honestly the responsi-ity of providing a solution to the problems which has constructed. It is to this point that the urch has a right to speak. We have need of au-ors who will face sin and guilt in their current nifestations, even as the bulk of contemporary thors do, but who see the validity of the Christian swers to these problems of love and redemption. William Faulkner, in his brilliant and sensitive Nobel Prize acceptance speech, gave evidence that he understood this. He said that the writer must leave "no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lusts, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands. . . . [Man] is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past." This is far closer to a Christian understanding of the responsibilities of authorship than one can find in most "wholesome" novels or even most "inspirational" best-sellers.

Lists of Forbidden Books

Let us now turn our attention away from the nature of contemporary literature toward the question of what we are going to do with contemporary literature. The solution which the Roman Catholic Church has reached is relatively simple. It is this: Literature which pictures behavior that is immoral in the sight of the Roman Church is placed on a list comprised of those movies, books and plays forbidden to the Roman Catholic Christian. Sometimes the Roman church argues that its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* has had hardly a book or a work of art placed on it for many years and that it is actually comprised mainly of books written during the Middle Ages. True enough—at least, technically true; but the simple fact is that similar lists are published by the Legion of Decency in almost every diocese, and many parishes publish their own lists of forbidden works.

Walter Kerr, drama critic of the *New York Herald Tribune* and himself a Roman Catholic, pointed out in his recent book, *Censorship and Criticism*, that if a Roman Catholic followed the dictates of all the lists published in the United States in a recent year, he could have seen but one well-known

movie that year, namely *Howdy Mr. Ice.* Mr. Kerr goes on to say that the conscientious Roman Catholic is, by such censorship practice, limited to the most mediocre and innocuous of works in his literary diet.

Not only has religious censorship meant a pablumlike diet, it also means that the church which approves of the principle of censorship is presuming to make moral judgments in behalf of and instead of its constituent members. Censorship, in short, stunts the growth of moral and spiritual maturity, by refusing the right to make moral judgments.

Let there be no doubt that a large portion of modern literature deals with behavior which cannot be approved by the Christian church or by individual Christians. We have, nonetheless, no right to pretend that such literature does not exist; or to threaten hell fire for those who read it. Inflicting critical judgment upon others is thoroughly un-Christian and can result only in shriveling the ability to make valid moral decisions in those who are forbidden to make their own decisions.

Unanswered Question

But let's get back to our original question. What about *Baby Doll*?

First, let it be admitted that Elia Kazan's direction is superb; the characterizations by the three principal actors in the movie are excellent. Tennessee Williams, as a writer, has permitted us to answer affirmatively that his drama is true to an aspect of the life which he has chosen to portray. That such decadence exists may be something we wish to deny, but if we are honest we cannot do so. That there are some who are weak and despicable is obvious; that there are others who are strong and just as despicable is sure. That some permit hatred and revenge to become overriding motivations in life so that all else fades into a blur of unimportance is faithful reporting.

On the other hand, an emphatic No must be given to the question of whether we agree with the solution offered for the problems which the author has posed. In fact no solution is provided in Williams' provocative plot other than the implicit one that sin and evil and weakness can be punished by an equivalent outpouring of sin and evil and strength. With this, the follower of the Christ must disagree.

An artist utilizes an art form, poetry or music or drama, because he is able better to say something in that form than he could say the same thing in another form. When one has nothing to say, however, then the utilization of an art form is the most blatant kind of prostitution. It is like calling the cry of a peanut vendor literature, to give such a designation to this work by Mr. Williams. The sole purpose would seem to be the same: to put money in the bank.

Baby Doll may be seen without sinning. I am sure of this. I am equally sure that some will be led to sins by seeing it. The question about sin that still needs answering, though, has to do with Mr. Williams' lavishing his considerable talent on this *Baby Doll.*

Two Prayers

By Donald E. Riker

First Presbyterian Church, Harvard, Illinois

WE bow to worship thee, O God, conscious t thy help and strength are always available us. Midst the work and toil of life we are of aware of thy nearness, prompting us to courage and thoughtful living. Surely we would thank t for the goodness of life—for the beauty of t world, for the eternal victory of right over wrc for the freedoms and opportunities that we enjo but most of all we are thankful for thee, ever giv meaning and completion to our lives.

A new week has begun and, fearful lest we m inadequate use of our time and privileges, we s thy guidance and direction. Encourage us alw to live above the common level of life. Help us spend with great care and wisdom each hour day of our lives. May we never think of life something to be endured, but only as a gift of th that we may properly use and enjoy. May e night bring to us a sense of worth-while acc plishment, an honest feeling of having done best for thee and for ourselves.

We pray thee this day, O God, to meet the ne of our individual lives. If we are low in spirit, lift up, and if we are lofty in pride, make us to se our dependence on thee and our fellow men. Gu the skilled hands that would restore the sick, gr strength to the weary and peace to the distress And whatever our need may be, as we seek help, strengthen us to do all that we can to h and to aid others.

In the spirit of Jesus do we pray. Amen.

* * *

IN quietness and in confidence we turn thoughts to thee, O God, conscious that t art the strength and hope of our lives. We tha thee for the gift of life and for the privilege of liv and working in thy world. Make us to feel at ho in this world and to believe that there is a po to hold us up in life, which is far stronger than those factors that would pull us down. Free from undue anxiety about tomorrow's food and morrow's needs, that we may rightly enjoy the vantages and opportunities of this day.

Widen our minds that we may absorb more thy world—more of its beauty and joy, more of burdens and possibilities. Stretch our hearts that may love more of our neighbors, our countryn and those who differ from us in color or cust Rekindle our quest for the good life, that our lo ings may become our actions and our ideals pattern of our daily lives.

Save us this day from self-love, from clo minds, and from contentment with things that ish. Inspire us to be noble and honest, and keep always on the side of everything that is good right. Bless each of us and those we love, this and each day of our lives.

In the spirit of Jesus do we pray. Amen.

oo Good to e True?

By Jack Finegan

"We bring you . . . good news." Acts 13:32.

HE name for the Christian message in the New Testament is "gospel." The Greeks had a word, n which our word "angel" is derived, which nt "to bring news." To that they added a pre- o make a term signifying "to bring good news." m this comes our verb "evangelize." Related to verb was a Greek noun which we translate ngel" or "gospel." It meant the crown which put on the head of a runner who burst in with l news from a distant place. Or it meant the ifice which they offered in thanksgiving when received good news. Or it meant the good s itself. That is the word which is used in the Testament for the Christian message.

is a wonderful thing to receive good news. en we do, how delighted we are! Whether it es as a telegram, a telephone call, or a letter, nore directly as somebody comes to us with l news, we are happy to get it. It is also a won- ul thing to take good news to somebody. It is ivilege to go to others and tell them something l. You see the light break on their faces. How py they are! This is the way it is in the New tament when the Christian message is brought. he Gospel according to Mark, we read of Jesus, he came preaching the gospel of God, that is good news about God and from God. Later we in the same Gospel that "the great throng d him gladly." In Acts we read how Paul and companions came to the city of Antioch. They stood up there and said, "We bring you the good news." A little later we read, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad."

It seems a tragedy that sometimes evangelism has come to signify threatening people. Indeed, we ought to stand in horror and dread of sin and its penalties, but the Christian message is primarily about how to experience the victory. It seems regrettable also when the message is only one of admonition to duty, exhortation to responsibility. That also is getting the matter backwards. The Christian message is, first of all, wonderfully good news. When we have heard it, then, because we are grateful, we want to do the various things that are our duty and responsibility.

Amazing Friendliness

Now let us glance through the New Testament, and bring together several of the statements in which there is this sense that what is told is something very good, almost incredibly good, almost too good to be true! Yet, actually, it is too good not to be true, and too true not to be good.

The first fact that we may notice is the amazing friendliness of what God has already done for us. About this, John says that God loved us before we loved him. "We love, because he first loved us." As we try to understand this for ourselves, we remember that Jesus took illustrations from the home and family life and used them as pictures of God and man. We come, then, into a family as a tiny baby, helpless, with little understanding. But we are received in the ordinary home with love, and surrounded and sustained by love. The mother has prepared a crib and soft blankets. The father is out at work to earn money to pay the bills. The baby instinctively thrives on this love; it languishes if it is lacking. The baby is not yet old enough to understand, to comprehend. Eventually we grow up enough to realize what our parents have done for us. Then we become aware that they loved us before we were mature enough to know very much about what they were doing for us, to comprehend their love, or adequately to reciprocate it. Perhaps it is a long time in life before we fully realize what our dear parents have done for us, and then we love them the more because they have loved us already. Even so God has put us here in this world and prepared a thousand things in it to make it home for us. We gradually become aware that his love has been around us even before we were understanding enough to know it, before we comprehended him. It is said that when it became possible to communicate with Helen Keller, she was told about God. She signed back, "I have always known him, but I did not know his name." Even before we know God's name, his love is around us. He loved us before we loved him. We grow up and learn to answer his love with our love.

Another part of this amazing friendliness of God toward us is that he showed that love in the fact that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Paul talks about this with the feeling that it is almost too good to be true, something almost incredibly wonderful. Paul thinks of a righteous man,

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probably meaning a rather stern, harsh man. One would scarcely die for such a person. Then there is a good man, a lovable man. Perhaps somebody will die for him. But Christ's sacrifice, says Paul, depended on no such worthiness on our part. We were yet sinners when he died for us. We were those who snarled at him at the foot of the cross. We were those who followed afar off. We were those who denied, betrayed, were little interested—and he died for us while we were yet of such sort. This shows us what God is like. We see, then, an amazing friendliness in God toward us.

Great Generosity

In the second place we notice an amazing generosity in God's offer to us, in the conditions of salvation. For one thing, God offers us forgiveness if we will only repent. Here are several passages in the Old Testament and the New which state this: Isaiah 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Ezekiel 33:14-15—"Though I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right . . . he shall surely live." Luke 24:47, summing up the message of Christianity — "That repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations." I John 1:9—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This is so good that people can almost not believe it. The proof that people can hardly believe it may be seen in such a thing as the institution of penance in the Middle Ages. At that time a vast penitential system was set up by men who could not believe the words of the Bible as they stand. In this system it was necessary for the priest to pronounce absolution. This was believed to give freedom from eternal punishment, but temporal punishment still had to be undergone by the sinner, either in this life or in purgatory. Catalogues were therefore made of the penances which should be performed to make up for sins. In these catalogues all the different kinds of evildoing were listed, and the corresponding things were specified which man must do to make up for the wrongs committed. For one sin a man must stay up all night and pray. For another he must make a visit to a holy place. For yet another he must go on pilgrimage for ten years; or instead, if he chose, pay a certain sum of money. This was the most dangerous part of the system. Forgiveness might be purchased by paying money.

Indulgence-Sellers

Indulgences were offered for sale, so that those who had sinned might buy a ticket which would set them free. At one time in particular, Pope Leo X was interested in obtaining more money for work on St. Peter's Church in Rome, and Albert of Brandenburg, the Archbishop of Mainz, needed more money to pay back the loan with which he had purchased his office, and so indulgences were being sold. John Tetzel was peddling them in one part of Germany. Here is an eyewitness' account of th arrival of Tetzel in a German town:

> When the indulgence-seller approached the town, th document proclaiming the indulgence was carried befo him on a cloth of velvet and gold, and all the priests an monks, the town council, the schoolmasters and the scholars, and all the men and women went out to me him with banners and candles and songs, forming a gre procession; then, all the bells ringing and all the orga playing, they accompanied him to the principal churc a red cross was set up in the midst of the church, and th pope's banner was displayed; in short, one might thin they were receiving God himself.

Then the indulgence-seller preached a sermon, i which he declared that "the gate of heaven wa open" and that the sale would begin. And peop came and paid their money to buy indulgenc which would take care of their sins. They coul not believe that it was as simple as it says in th New Testament. This was, of course, when Marti Luther posted his theses, in which he declared, "Th Christian who has true repentance has already re ceived pardon from God altogether apart from a indulgence, and does not need one; Christ demand this true repentance from every one." That is th true teaching of the Christian religion.

Justification by Faith

This is the easiest thing in the world; all you hav to do is repent. It is also the hardest thing in th world, for you must turn with all your heart to Go If the matter were to be settled on the basis o indulgences, then you could commit a sin, and bu an indulgence and take care of it. You could com mit another sin if you wanted to, and buy anothe indulgence to make up for it, just as you colle parking tickets down town. You can get anothe one and take care of it too whenever necessary. S what the Bible offers is harder than that, and ye it is easier than that. Nothing is required but ou turning to God, and then, it is promised, we sha be forgiven.

Consider also the amazing generosity of God offer when we are told in the New Testament tha we may be justified by faith. According to legalism whether in parts of the Old Testament or elsewher it is necessary to build up our own good works i the sight of God, to be considered right. If we brea as much as one law, we are guilty of all. Accordin to some medieval doctrine, salvation is a quantit tive thing. So many good works must be wroug in order to attain salvation before God. But accor ing to Paul, and according to Martin Luther, an according to God's authentic word through the great messengers of his, we may be justified b faith. If we have loving trust in God, he will accou us as right in his sight on the basis of that fait Paul Tillich says: "Faith is courage to accept th fact that we are accepted by God, even though w are unacceptable." Here is the amazing generosi of God's offer to us. It is almost too good to be tru People have not been able to believe it, but it is t good not to be true.

In the third place, beyond the amazing frien liness of what God has done for us already, and t amazing generosity of what he offers to us rig

w, we note the amazing blessedness of what he omises for the future.

He promises that death will be a door and heaven l be home. "In my Father's house are many oms." We walk across the room of a great house, l on the far side of the room in which we have en, there is a doorway, and it opens into another om. This is the amazing blessedness of the prom- that is ours, that when we come to death, we ll pass "through an open door." In the words ich are used with the largo of the *New World mphony*, "I'm agoin' home . . . jes goin' home through an open door."

Blessed Promises

A minister came back recently from abroad and ated an incident of which he had heard in Great tain. A scrubwoman in London was taken sick. r friends made it possible for her to go to the spital. While she was convalescing there, she went and down the corridor and became acquainted h other patients. Across the hall from her was oy, twelve years old, redheaded, freckle-faced. e and he talked every day. Then one morning was wakened early by commotion in the hall, and before long the boy's mother came in to tell her, "The doctors say Johnny has about ten minutes to live. Won't you say something to him?" That was a hard assignment. But this London scrubwoman, with the courage of a great Christian, walked quietly across the hall and sat down beside Johnny. She took his thin hand between her calloused palms and looked at him and said: "Listen, Johnny, God made you. God loves you. God sent his Son to save you. God wants you to come home to live with him." The little boy propped himself up on his elbows, feebly, and entreated his friend, "Say it again." Quietly, she repeated the same words: "God made you. God loves you. God sent his Son to save you. God wants you to come home to live with him." Johnny looked into the calm face of his friend and said, "Tell God, 'Thank you.' "

I would like to tell God "thank you" for loving me before I ever loved him; for letting Jesus Christ die for me when I was yet a sinner; for promising me forgiveness if I will only repent; for promising me that he will look upon me as all right in his sight if I have faith and trust him; for promising me that when I come to death, it will be a door, and that heaven will be home.

A Palm Sunday Story

A Children's Sermon by Bertram de Heus Atwood

First Presbyterian Church, Englewood, New Jersey

ET me tell you a story about a little boy named Nathan. He lived in Jerusalem long ago with father and mother, and they were very poor. e father had a little donkey that he called Satan, ause she was slow and always behind. But she a good little donkey in spite of her name, and carried big loads of wood and stone—loads vier than she was. She was very important to han's family, for his father was a delivery man, Satan was used to carry the loads.

But a sad thing happened. Satan got tired and and just lay in the straw behind Nathan's se. No matter how much Nathan petted her and spered in her ear, she couldn't get up. It was a time for Nathan's family. What would Father They were too poor to get another donkey.

Then one day Nathan heard that a Man had e to town who was kind and good and clever. ple went to him with their troubles, and this n helped them. He healed the blind and made lame walk. So Nathan went to see him. As the d pushed through the crowd someone said, n't bother him, boy—go away. He's tired." But kindly Man heard, and he said, "Let the boy e to me, and forbid him not, for of such is the dom of heaven."

o Nathan told the Man about Satan, his don- and the Man laughed at the funny name. And n Nathan told him the reason for the name, He , "That's a good place to have Satan—behind " And He looked at Peter, one of his friends.

Then the kindly Man said, "I'll go with you. We'll see what's the matter with Satan." And He went to Nathan's home and whispered in the donkey's ear. The donkey looked at Him and, strange as it may seem, she got up and seemed to feel better.

Nathan ran and told his father and mother that Satan was well, and they all were happy.

Months passed, and then one night a knock came on the door. A man asked to speak to Nathan's father. They talked in such low voices that Nathan could not hear what they said. But the next morning, early, Father called Nathan and told him to brush Satan's coat and polish her bridle. Soon a man came for the donkey and said, "Jesus wants her." And Father took him to where Satan was, and the man led Satan off.

That day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Nathan's little donkey. And the children sang and people spread palm branches in the street before them. And they cried, "Hosanna!"

The strangest thing of all was that when the donkey was brought back that night she had a mark on her back, right behind the shoulders. It was like a cross, dark brown against the gray coat.

And from that day to this every donkey has a cross on its back. If you don't believe me, the next time you ride a donkey look for the cross. It's there—on every donkey. Last summer in Wales we rode donkeys, and I looked at lots of them, and they all had crosses, just as plain as day!

Montgomery Negroes End a Y
Of Struggle for F
Class Citizens

The Christian Drama

By Gardner Taylor

If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. Romans 6:5.

SITTING in a telephone booth in New York city, I heard a man's voice in the next booth. The drift of his conversation indicated that he was talking to his girl friend. Finally, this graphic sentence came through the thin walls of the adjoining booth, "Honey, the merry-go-round done broke down."

Is that a description of our Western civilization? Has the bright dream of human dignity for all men now been dissipated by the rapacity and sinfulness of our society's standards? Are we in the twilight of a day that dawned bright and hopeful for the sons of men — a day whose glistening sunrise brought promise of liberty and equality, the brotherhood of man? Has the old Western ideal of integrity and honor now been laid by the acids of modernity, the brittle creed that a man does not matter in terms of what he is, but in terms of what he has, or what the color of his skin is?

Ills of Western Society

Walter Lippmann says that our society here in the Western world is not wounded, not battered under the assault of its enemies from without. He says our society is sick, suffering with internal diseases. Instead of recognizing the Old Testament assertion that all of life is "bound in the bundle of the living," we have separated humanity according to crass human standards, for the satisfaction of our pride and prejudice. Bereft of a Master-sense of God in our lives, we have forgotten who we are because we have forgotton whose we are.

Our society—sore, stricken, separated—needs the infusion of a new sense of spirituality, of the authentic word and will and way of God. We are far-country prodigals, starving beside pigsties and destined never to be whole again until we are back at Father's house, remembering that the Lord been "our dwelling place in all generations," sett ourselves to his will and his way, obedient to impulses, thinking his thoughts after him, dream of a fairer, more just world as our rightful herit and our obvious birthright.

The New Testament, face to face with a ha bitten, metallic culture such as ours, confron the world with an almost unbelievable, radi faith. If Rome was the society of the crown, early Christians were the society of the cross. was the meeting of two mutually contradict ways of life. One, Rome's, was haughty; the oth Christ's, was humble. Rome's society was found on success, Christ's way was built on service. T followers of Rome believed in the power of ar and sword, the followers of Christ believed in power of the spirit of righteousness. One was pow centered, the other was personality-centered.

Commitment to Moral Integrity

The writer of Romans set down in brief comp the faith of true Christians in the way which Chr chose. In one startling sentence that reverses verdict of the world, this believer declared, "If have been united with him in a death like his, shall certainly be united with him in a resurrect like his." The "death like his" describes the w of his life, the nature of his earthly end. It is summation of the central commitment of the of Jesus which has thrilled and haunted twe centuries.

The "death like his" represents, surely, his refu to rely on any earthly weapon; the apparent sha and disgrace with which his career ended. Th unknown lyricist whom we call the Second Isai was true to the spirit of Christ.

> Who has believed what we have heard?
> And to whom has the arm of the Lord been reveal
> For he grew up before him like a young plant,
> and like a root out of dry ground,
> he had no form or comeliness that we should look at h
> and no beauty that we should desire him.
> He was despised and rejected by men;
> a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
> and as one from whom men hide their faces
> he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
>
> Surely he has borne our griefs
> and carried our sorrows;
> yet we esteemed him stricken,
> smitten by God, and afflicted. . . .

GARDNER TAYLOR, *pastor since 1948 of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York, on December 6 preached this anniversary sermon for the Montgomery Improvement Association, commemorating one year of the struggle for first class citizenship by the Negro community in the Alabama city. A year ago Dr. Taylor's congregation, which numbers more than 10,000 members, moved into a new $1,200,000 church building, replacing one which was destroyed by fire in 1952.*

e was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
ke a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth.
y oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
at he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

s the poetry of Calvary's stark shame and fatal se. The likeness of his death represents the way ommitment of a life to faith in the moral integ- of the universe. Jesus went to his Calvary eving that his way would be certified and guar- ed by God.

The Cry Heard in the Land

uch must be the faith of Christians! The mo- t we stop believing that there is a power not own which makes for righteousness we have ended our participation in the life of Christ. at else has kept us firm against overwhelming s? Far back in the slave quarters our fathers mmed softly in the twilight the words, "I'm so trouble don't last always. O my Lord, what I I do?" The wail of Israel's ancient cry was their hearts, "Let my people go." The cry is heard in the land.

Ve are committed in Montgomery to the faith righteousness finds its way to resurrection by ng its Calvary. Here some people, "not many hty, not many noble," have entrusted their s and their fortunes and their honor not to the s of men but to the sword of the spirit. Here a and men with giant souls in youthful bodies e led some people toward the way of Calvary, the justification of many. Here some people of ble origin, but with a sense of high destiny, e challenged the conscience of the world.

he likeness of his death, the way of commitment he moral sanity of the universe, the way of nce upon God's word and God's promises is r a way of particularism for the special benefits ny one segment of the society. Jesus did not go is Calvary for disciples alone. He died as surely Pilate as he died for Peter. He died as surely for centurion who plunged the spear in his side as id for Mary Magdalene who poured her grati- e at his feet. Jesus died as surely for Rome as ied for Galilee and Judea. Jesus died as surely those who jammed the reed in mockery of a ter in his hand, as surely for those who threw old barracks blanket around his shoulder to k a regal robe, as he did for those simple souls filled the air with their hosannas and his path their palms. The word is writ as large as the el, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son, that whoever believes in him should not sh but have eternal life."

Seedtime and Harvest

behooved some gallant souls to take a cross the redemption of our republic and this south- to its true dignity, destiny and decency. We ld read wrong the Christian way were we to be- or so to bear ourselves as to give the impression that we sorrow and suffer for ourselves alone. Someone must save the nation, someone or some people of vision whose hearts are open to the winds of God's will, whose eyes are open to the beckonings of God's hand, must suffer for the nation's salvation. All the people of this city and section and nation are God's people. Who else could travel the steep, red way of Calvary but those who by bitter plight of circumstance have not known the sins which are nigh inevitable in any majority people?

> And they made his grave with the wicked
> and with a rich man in his death,
> although he had done no violence,
> and there was no deceit in his mouth.
>
> Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him;
> he has put him to grief; . . .
> and was numbered with the transgressors;
> yet he bore the sin of many,
> and made intercession for the transgressors.

There is in the Christian drama the downward plunge to apparent defeat, and the pained period of waiting to see the result of it all. We must never forget that our Lord Christ did not on Friday die and find victory on the same day. At least the victory was not placarded before the world, or for even the eyes of faith to see. The church rightly shrouds its altar in black during the period between the Black Friday of crucifixion and the Bright Sunday of resurrection. There is a spiritual which runs, "You can't hurry God. Why don't you wait, my brother." The commitment must be made, and we must leave the rest to God. The seed must be planted, and though we till the soil, we must wait in that agony of suspense between seedtime and harvest.

Redemption Is Costly

I do not know why truth and righteousness are not immediately vindicated and justified. It may well be that the "powers of darkness" are not routed with the snapping of a finger. Jesus gave full allowance for the strength of wrong, the power of entrenched evil, as soldiers laid their hands on his innocent person, to lead him away. Said he, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." I do not know why redemption costs so much—in blood and sweat and shame and suspense—unless it be that evil is a mighty foe, "a strong man armed who keepeth his goods." I only know that when God got ready, as Gossip says, to turn a world free from sin's awful bondage, it took God giving all of God's all. I do not know why the way of men's social redemption must be lined in blood and sorrow. I only know there is no other way. No cross, no crown. No pain, no birth. No suffering, no salvation. No pain, no peace. Such is the law of our universe, or Christ would not have died.

Those across this land who have made their commitment to the Christian way of sacrifice and hazard for the saving of the nation are going through a dark and fearful night of waiting and uncertainty and horror—here and yonder. To some it must appear unbearable, the burden insuperable. And yet, peering through the tortured night waiting for the morning to come, searching the skies for some sign

of approaching dawn, we are confident that God makes his universe to turn on axles of justice.

But it were vain to imagine, even in the period of waiting and suspense, that the tides of the universe ceased to flow, that God was absent, silent or inactive. Even though the Scriptures pull a veil over much of Calvary and the interval of our Lord's time in the grave and shut it from human gaze, as if it were too reverent for human view, still the Scriptures suggest that the Father was at work. Judas flinging his silver and his life away bore tragic testimony in his death to the power of God to work in human situations. Simon, whose base denial had added to the weight of Calvary, was likewise plastic to the workings of God's Grace. His bitter tears dropped as testimony that the Father who worked hitherto works still. The valiant commitment of Jesus's life wrung from unbelieving lips, even while he died, the blurted cry of the centurion: "Truly, this was the Son of God."

The World's Conscience

If no other words of committal were uttered over the Lord's lifeless body, then let the centurion's words be his well-earned eulogy. Many that day, we can safely believe, saw and believed; and, while they were afraid to speak, their hearts were turned toward God's throne. Surely as Friday's lights go out, humble men and plain women standing near the silent hill searched their souls and were touched by this deed of sacrifice.

Make no mistake! Beyond your ken of understanding, even while you wait for the resurrection faith to be reasserted, things are happening. By what has happened here the world's conscience is a little more sensitive to the whispers of God. Here in Montgomery, behind shutters and in rooms of which you know not, and in houses you would not dream, and among people you would not imagine, soul-searching has doubtless taken place. Men and women who want to love the Lord must have asked themselves if they are among those who in your crucifixion help crucify the Lord afresh. Your gallantry and your faith and God's goodness have staved off violence. In distant lands and on lonely islands men have prayed and pray for you. By your Calvary, Montgomery has become a central item on the prayer agenda of the world. Take heart then; even now things of which you and I do not dream are taking place through God's Providence and by your commitment.

There is a faith—it is founded in God—that he will bring to pass what he has begun. It is the faith that no life committed to him can fall beyond his grasp. The central drama of the Christian faith is the death of our Lord, the anguished waiting, the glorious denouement on Easter Sunday, the coming forth of the conquering Lord. Christians believe that the resurrection of the Lord Christ was the reversal of all the world's verdicts, the annulment of all claims of evil, the repudiation of the supposed power of expediency and sin. The coming forth of the reigning Lord represents for Christians the denial of all the charges of injustice, the disavowal of all the libels that wickedness can impose, the vindication of the sanity of the universe. The tru pets at the end of the drama are no longer mut they blare the coronation; the banners are lifted full mast. He leads captivity captive and puts rout the armies of the aliens.

Here we stake our faith. As surely as God liv his way must triumph. He will not leave our so in hell. "He who began a good work in you w bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Chris Galling may be our cross, steep may be our wa long may be our journey, dark may be our nig cold may be our way, hard may be our lot, hea may be our hearts, sore may be our spirits, slow m be our dawn, but if we are "united with him i death like his, we shall certainly be united wi him in a resurrection like his."

One of our forefathers has written, in years n gone, the heart of our faith as we struggle for a f America and for our citizenship:

> Harder yet may be the fight,
> Right may often yield to might.
> Wickedness awhile may reign,
> Satan's cause may seem to gain.
>
> There is a God who rules above,
> With hand of power and heart of love.
> If I am right, he'll fight my battle.
> I shall have peace some day.

Two Poems

The Rope

GIVE me enough rope
And I will hang
Myself a bell
Under an old oak beam,
And clang into every open ear
From this heavy, dangling year
The sound of hope.
Give me enough rope,
An iron tongue—
Let this back ache
And these hands blister
For Jesus' sake,
As I heave my one theme
Of hope, hope, hope
Across the slate and tile and brick
Of my little bishopric.

Clown for Christ

FOOL, jester, clown
for Christ—
Chase the limelight with a broom.
Crack the peanut with a sledge.
Teeter on a fiscal ledge.
Pantomime against the boom
and glitter
While knitting ladies ooh
and titter.
Two-cheeked, take your slaps
And pratfall, and perhaps
This foolishness will grow wise,
Juggling souls to paradise.

JAMES R. BLACKWOOD

'Go, and Do Not Sin Again'

By Clyde Manschreck

SUNDAY after Sunday we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," and I wonder sometimes if we ever give the words a second thought. What were you thinking when you last prayed this? Can you recall that the passage meant anything at all? About such things John Donne said, "It is a sad consideration! I throw myself downe in my Chamber, and I call in and invite God and his Angels thither, and when they are there, I neglect God and his Angels for the noise of a Flie or a straw under my knee."

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive . . ." Could this possibly mean that God's forgiveness of me depends on my forgiveness of others? What a dreadful thought! This is a frightening prospect, for I am full of prejudice, blindness, insensitivity and weakness. If God forgives me only as I forgive others, then I may never be forgiven. I would be plunged into the depths of despair if I thought that God's forgiveness depended upon *my* forgiving others. Nevertheless, the thought that this is so haunts me.

Unconditioned Love

But surely this is not the meaning of this passage in the Lord's Prayer because such an interpretation does not agree with many passages of Scripture: In Romans we read, "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." *While we were yet sinners,* before we did anything to make ourselves worthy! In John we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." In this there is no suggestion that I must forgive before I am forgiven.

Yet the thought that I must forgive my fellow man will not leave me, no, not even when I think of the freely given, unconditioned love of God which is shown in that parable of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son does not first forgive others before he is forgiven. The father simply welcomes his son back home. In no sense does the Prodigal Son earn his father's love; in no sense does he deserve it. He simply accepts the love, or the forgiveness, of his father. On the other hand, the Elder Brother is pictured in an unfavorable light, even though he is the one who stays at home working the estate, for he thinks in some twisted fashion that he is earning the love of his father. He will not even go into the house. The father wonders why, and the Elder Son says, "Here I have served you all these years, and have never disobeyed an order of yours, and you have never given me a kid so that I could entertain my friends. But when your son here came, who has eaten up your property with women of the street, for him you killed the fatted calf!" Then the father says, "But my son, you have been with me all the time and everything that I have is yours."

When I think of a parable like that, I know that I cannot earn the love of God, for love is something that is given. The Elder Brother thought he was earning the love of the father, but he already possessed it. By thinking he could earn the love of his father, he perverted their relationship, because one can never earn love. The father in this parable stands for God.

When I read a parable like that of the Good Samaritan, I know that God's love and forgiveness are not dependent on what I do, for the Good Samaritan represents God, and the man in the ditch, left there half dead by the robbers, symbolizes you and me. We are helped by God, just as the Samaritan helped the man who had been beaten and left in the ditch. Certainly the man who lay on the side of the road did nothing to deserve or earn the love of the Samaritan.

Meant for Christians

What, then, does "Forgive us as we forgive others" mean? Could it mean that we do not put a condition on the freely given love of God, since we do not earn God's love, but that once we have received this love as a free gift, then the Lord puts a condition on us? Could it mean this? I think so. God freely loves us, but then he demands something of us, and woe unto us if we are found wanting. In the Old Testament, God first acted and made a covenant with the Hebrew people, and then he demanded that they be just and righteous. The same is true in the New Testament.

We are not told to earn God's forgiveness, but because we have already received of his love, we are called upon to love and help our fellow man.

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The Lord's Prayer was taught to those who had *already* received, namely the disciples, and this makes a difference in the meaning of the passage, "Forgive us our trespasses . . ." God does not say to us that we must be perfectly good before he will deign to look on us. He gives sunshine and rain to the just and the unjust. But God does say to those who have received his favor, "Go and do likewise." Or as it is in Romans, "Treat one another as Christ has treated you." Or as it is in John, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Looked at in this context, the passage means exactly what it seems to mean, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This is meant for Christians. It is not meant for one who does not yet know God. And it is still frightening!

The Unmerciful Servant

The parable of the Unmerciful Servant beautifully expresses this thought. Peter asked Jesus how many times one should forgive, and Jesus said seventy-seven times over. And then Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who resolved to settle accounts with his servants. One man who owed him ten million dollars was summoned. As he could not pay, the master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all he had. So the servant begged for mercy, and the master canceled the debt. Then the servant went out and met a man who owed him twenty dollars. And out on the street he caught him by the throat, shook him, and demanded that the twenty dollars be paid. The fellow begged for mercy, but the unmerciful servant refused and had him put in prison until he should pay the debt. When the master heard about this, he summoned the unmerciful servant again. "You wicked servant," he said. "I canceled all that debt of yours when you entreated me. Ought you not to have taken pity on your fellow servant as I did on you?" So the master handed him over to the jailers until he should pay all that he owed. Jesus ended the parable by saying, "That is what my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts."

The petition in the Lord's Prayer viewed in the context of this parable does impose a condition on man: You have been forgiven, and in joy and gratitude you should show the same kind of love to your fellow man as God has shown to you. Forgiving others is simply the fruit that one should expect from having received God's blessing.

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for Christians, and the petition "Forgive us as we forgive others" is our confession and pledge to show the kind of love to our fellow man that God has shown to us.

Materialistic Interest

This petition in the Lord's Prayer should be a natural for Christians—not the least bit difficult, not the least bit damning in its boomerang implications! But why is it so hard to ask God to forgive us *as we forgive others?* Why are we reluctant to do so?

In the first place, because we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, because we have never confessed our sins and received the forgiving divine touch. We have never really stood before God, trembling in the wrath that he visits upon sin. We have never faced the mystery of death. And so, to most of us, the Christian message means little other than a church service now and then, some moralisms, or a standard of respectability. We do not have any message or conviction because our Christianity means no more to us than we mean to ourselves. We are Christian because it is customary for decent people to be Christians.

In John's Gospel we read the story of the woman who met Jesus at the well. At first she taunts him. "Why does a Jew like you ask a woman of Samaria like me for a drink?" When Jesus speaks of living water, she makes fun of him. But when he says he can give her water that will spring up eternally within her, she becomes interested. "Sir, give me this water so that I may not thirst, nor have to come all this way from the village to draw."

This materialistic interest in religion is sub-Christian, and Jesus can do nothing for the woman on this level. Not until Jesus says, "Go, call your husband," and then reveals that she has had five husbands and that the one with whom she is living is not her husband—not until then does she take a new attitude. Convicted of her sin, she confesses Jesus as a prophet and then runs into the village announcing that the Christ has come. She has something to shout about. We could have a message, a conviction, too, but so often religion is just a part of the status quo.

Self-Righteous Sinners

In the second place, we are not forgiving because we do not think we are sinners. Why should we ask God to forgive *us* as we forgive others when we have not sinned as *others* have? To recognize sin, we seem to believe, is to have a guilt complex, and everybody knows we should not have guilt complexes; we might feel frustrated!

We are not so bad, are we? We do not commit adultery like that woman in the Gospel of John. We have our faults, of course. We are not always honest; we cheat a little; but we are not greedy and adulterous and murderous. Our sins are minor! The Pharisee who prayed in the Temple felt the same way. We may not commit adultery, but we take advantage of others, and this is the sin in adultery.

The hardest thing to admit is that we are sinners; but unless we do admit it, we cannot be helped. When Johann Sebastian Bach sought to give musical expression to the very kernel of Christian truth, he could think of only two words, "Kyrie eleison." The B minor mass opens with the cry of the whole chorus and orchestra, "Kyrie eleison"; and in the fugue which follows all the voices and instruments independently take up the theme. There are no other words, simply "Kyrie eleison," "Lord have mercy upon us." Bach knew that the sense of utter human unworthiness is the permanent ground-bass through which the melody of the gospel of the mercy of God sounds in our ears.

It is hard for us to admit that we are wrong, or to take the blame for a bad situation. It is much easier to blame the NAACP or the Supreme Court. It is far easier to say that others do not understand the problem of integration.

Easier to Blame than Confess

In one of his novels, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoievsky tells the story of the Grand Inquisitor. During the inquisition in Spain, when thousands were being burned at the stake, Christ appeared and was immediately arrested. Late at night the Grand Inquisitor visited Jesus in his prison cell. "Why have you come back?" he asked. "Why did you come back to suggest to men again that they are free? You left things in an awful mess when you told men that the truth would make them free, and so we have corrected your work, because we know that free men are distraught and unhappy. We have told them a lie, but we have made them happy. We understand them. They do not mind our cruelty, because it is authority. And men must have authority. But now you appear again and endanger all our work. Tomorrow, at a sign from me, they will burn you."

When the Inquisitor ceased speaking, there was a long silence. Then without saying anything Christ approached the Old Inquisitor and softly kissed him on his bloodless lips. That was all. After a while the Inquisitor opened the prison door and told Christ to go and never return, lest he disturb the status quo. And what about the old man? "The kiss glows in his heart, but he still adheres to his ideas."

It is hard for us to confess, much easier to blame others.

In the story of the woman taken in adultery we see that a woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. What happened to the man we do not know. But a group of men drag the woman before Jesus and say, "Moses said we were to stone such a woman, but what do you say?" Jesus answers, "Let him who is without sin be the first to cast a stone." He writes something in the sand, and after a little while looks up to see that the men have dropped their stones and slipped away. And Jesus says to the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" "No one, Lord." "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

The Holy Spirit Works in Us

Note that Jesus recognizes her adultery as sin. He does not say to the woman, "What you have done is not any worse than what others have done, so think nothing of it; don't have a guilt complex." He does not say to her, "Now I want you gradually to stop your sinning . . . move cautiously . . . don't make anyone feel bad." Nor does he say a committee ought to consider the best course of action. No, he simply says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." And this is what he says to you and me.

Many of us cannot accept the Christian belief that we are sinners. But we must. And just this act of recognizing our sinfulness is like opening a door and entering another room. In this recognition we are given the promise and the help so that we can overcome our sins. In merely recognizing our sins, we open the door to the Holy Spirit, to the love of God, which will flood our hearts and in turn flow out to others, so that when we pray, "Forgive us as we forgive," we shall not be praying damnation upon ourselves. As Christians who already have the love of God we can pray, "Forgive us, O Lord, just as we forgive others." It is not so much we who forgive as it is the Holy Spirit within us. "Forgive us" is our confession; "as we forgive others" expresses our assurance that the Holy Spirit will work in us and give us the power, grace and mercy to forgive. The forgiveness is incomplete unless we forgive others as we have been forgiven, as in the story of the Unmerciful Servant.

In closing I would have you remember the words of Christ to all sinners: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

The Roof Will Fall In

By Alvin D. Johnson

First Baptist Church, Middletown, Connecticut

TO cover their embarrassment for not attending church, the recalcitrants say, "If I come to church the roof will fall in!"

The usual reply is, "I don't think so. Why don't you come and see what happens?"

The truth is, "Yes, the roof *will* fall in!"

The roof will fall in on your house of indifference to the things of God.

The roof will fall in on your house of self-righteousness, and you will see yourself as you are.

The roof will fall in on your house of selfishness, and you will see the heartaches and needs of others, and in turn you will absorb strength for your own needs.

The roof will fall in on your procrastination, your dishonesty with yourself and your belief that you can be as good a Christian out of the church as in it.

The roof will fall in on your belief that the church is full of hypocrites, posers and self-righteous people; instead, you will find real men and women making an honest attempt to worship and serve God. You will find them trying to cooperate in the fight against wrong, trying to make a positive contribution to right.

So let's agree now—the roof *will* fall in, but *which* roof?

Yes, the roof will fall in, but you will then be able to see clearly the overarching sky of God's love which has been hidden, lo, these many years by the roofs you have built.

Come to worship! Let's make the roof fall in.

A Spiritual Parallel to the International Geophysical Year

A Year of Christian Experiment

By Robert E. Luccock

A RECENT issue of *Look* magazine featured a remarkable Geophysical Atlas. An article of interpretation in this Atlas reported that in July scientists of fifty-six nations will begin an eighteen-month study of the secrets of the universe. During this International Geophysical Year they will gather "facts about the earth and its surroundings and the invisible forces that rule our lives."

Surely many of the secrets of creation to be revealed by this endeavor will excite imagination; some of them may alter the course of our lives. We await them with interest and anticipation.

Our Father's World

Wouldn't it be altogether as important to make this a "Geo-Christian Year"? There are invisible forces that rule our lives, as the Atlas points out. Some of them must be found and measured by telescope and spectroscope, by camera and chemistry. There are other invisible forces ruling our lives that only the faculties of faith can reveal. What an exciting study they would make! And who can tell what revelations might be given if, all over this land—or even throughout one parish—people were to make this a year of experiment to demonstrate that this is our Father's world.

Scientists will study "the winding, looping path which the world follows as it spins through space in five different directions at once, and at unbelievable speed. Rotating on its axis at 1000 miles an hour, it whirls around the sun at 20 miles a second. At the same time the sun is revolving around the center of its star system at a speed of 13 miles a second, the star system is moving in the Milky Way at 200 miles a second, and the Milky Way itself, carrying the sun and the earth with it, is traveling at a speed yet undetermined." But suppose you could add even one item of evidence that into the midst of all this inconceivable speed and energy God has himself come, with a purpose for life on this "fifth-rate" planet. That too would be something for man to reckon with!

Assume for the moment that in the personal Christian life someone were to offer grants for study and experiment, after the fashion of Rockefeller, Fulbright and Carnegie. Not so farfetched. Someone *has*. Did not Jesus say, "I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit"? Let us assume further that such a grant has come to you, and with it the healthy spiritual discipline of having to set down for yourself some plan or purpose for which you intend to use this year. What will you do with it? Will you spend it in an all-out assault on the whole of Christian mystery? Or will you strive to find one further strand in the pattern of truth, to offer one further confirmation, along with whatever scientists may learn of the world, that this is what J. B. Phillips has called "The Visited Planet"?

Plans for Christian Study

A physicist may be granted a whole year's support while he labors to learn more about the properties of a single element under varying conditions. His endeavor is important when united with all other evidence of how elemental material behaves. A social historian will spend a year tracing one cultural pattern as it influences national behavior, or the way in which history modifies mores and morals. One strand—to be woven by others into a greater fabric of truth. Could you, in a year, find one thread of demonstration to be woven by others into a greater witness for the gospel? Some experiment to make, some "proof" to offer, which in the summing up of your life in 1957-58 could be taken for evidence that God had visited our world, that he is even now present? To be sure, the gospel cannot be "proved" in the sense of laboratory "proof." Yet one who knew well the mind of Christ said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." There is a sense in which each one must validate the gospel in his own experience. No news is not good news when it does not get through to me, and beyond me to others.

Each one must outline his own plan. But be careful to articulate your purpose in precise terms. No one ever won a Fulbright scholarship to study chemistry or history "in general." Your year is not for religious life "in general"; it is for a particular discipline and a concentrated experiment.

Someone may use the year to demonstrate a show of courage, faith and patience under adversity, offering strong evidence that "they who wait for

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ROBERT E. LUCCOCK *preached this as a New Year's sermon to his congregation at the Church of the Redeemer, New Haven, Connecticut, but its reference to the Geophysical Year makes it current now as at the start of the calendar year. Mr. Luccock, who is associate editor of the* Pulpit Digest *and author of two books of sermons, joined the Congregational Church in 1949 when he became minister of the New Haven church, after having served two Methodist parishes in Plainville, Connecticut, and Northport, Long Island.*

ıe Lord *shall renew their strength*"; being able to ıy with personal certainty, "I *can do* all things him who strengthens me."

Someone may undertake now a new experiment forgiveness. He will show that "to the Lord our od, *do* belong mercy and forgiveness," that when e forgive others our Heavenly Father forgives us.

Social Witness

Someone will delay no longer to make a venture trust where the way is not known but where he elieves the right to be found. At the end of the ear he will submit confirmation that Christ *is* the ay, the truth and the life.

Someone will seize this year to make a Christian ocial witness, between the races, in the affairs of ıe business world, determined to prove that "bet-er is a little with righteousness, than great revenues ith injustice." His purpose to document what appens when a person says, "As for me and my ouse, we will serve the Lord."

Someone asks only for a year to experiment with ıe hard discipline of daily prayer to find a living, ving relationship with God that is more than rmal. He will "pray without ceasing" to see if ıe place where he is *will be* shaken.

Somewhere a church may declare its purpose for ıis year, to give a command performance in Chris-an social service, in the joining of its light to other ghts that men may see and glorify their Father ho is in heaven.

What will be the effect of all this search and xperiment? By the grace of God others may believe ur report and take it for confirmation of the truth ıce declared in Christ. It does happen. About a entury ago the mother of a large family died while er children were quite young. Years after her eath one of her daughters said this of her mother: I was between three and four years of age when ur mother died, and my own personal recollections her are therefore few. But the deep interest and eneration that she inspired in all who knew her as such that during all my childhood I was con-antly hearing her spoken of, and from one friend another some incident or anecdote of her life as constantly being impressed upon me. Although other's bodily presence disappeared from our rcle, I think that her memory and example had ore influence in molding her family, in deterring om evil and exciting to good than the living pres-ıce of many mothers."

Invisible Forces

And a younger brother said this of that mother: The memory of my mother as one sainted has erted a singular influence on me. After I came to about fourteen or fifteen years of age I began be distinctly aware that there was a silent, secret d, if you please to call it so, romantic influence ıich was affecting me. I am conscious that all my e long there has been a moral power in my mem-y of her." Not altogether untended by a step-other, this influence did bear fruit. These chil-en, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward eecher, did believe the report of their mother, Roxanna Foote Beecher. So it does happen and it can happen.

All this kind of confirmation, widely accumulated; the communication of these authentic tidings from an unseen world, gathered in vast array; the demonstration of invisible forces that can rule our lives for great good—this could make of 1957-58 the acceptable year of the Lord.

Sermons for Children

By Russell Clair

First Congregational Church, Groton, New York

HOW do you show your friends that you like them? Yes, by being nice to them. Can any of you think of a particular way? Yes, giving them things to eat is just what I had in mind. Often my boys ask to have a friend stay for a meal. I am sure you do the same thing. Having your friends eat with you is a good way to get closer to them.

Jesus had a room prepared and asked his friends to eat there with him. When he gave them wine and bread, he said, "Eat this in remembrance of me." That is, "When you eat a supper like this, remember me."

When we have bread and wine in the church, we say we "have communion." People who love Jesus gather in groups all over the world and have bread and wine together. They think about Jesus and talk to him. This makes them seem nearer and dearer to their friends and closer to God and Jesus.

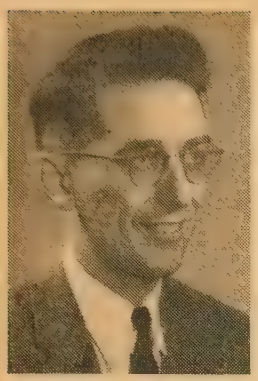
* * *

CAN any of you tell me what I have in my hand? Yes, it is an eraser such as you use in school. What do you do with erasers? Yes, you clean the blackboard.

Why do you wish to erase the blackboard? Well, I have several good answers. "We erase the blackboard so we can write different things on it." "We erase the blackboard to make the room look neat." "We erase the blackboard when we make mistakes." All that is true.

Now let's consider this answer: "We erase when we make mistakes." And what do we do then? Yes, we try again, and try not to make mistakes the next time. We are lucky to be able to try again! How many times can we try again? That's right, we can try as often as we wish.

This morning we said the Lord's Prayer. Was there anything in the prayer that has to do with erasing? Yes, we say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." What a wonderful thought—that our prayer can be an eraser to blot out our mistakes! I am sure none of us means to make mistakes, but when we do—and we all do—we can ask God to erase them and let us try again. And we can do that as often as we wish to start over again. When we are sorry enough to ask God to forgive our mistakes, he will always hear us. That is one of the most comforting thoughts in the world.



How Long Is a Day?

By James R. Blackwood

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?" John 11:9.

HOW long is a day? No theme drums through our common experience more persistently than the feeling that time speeds up or slows down, stretches out or shrinks, according to the variable pitch of our emotions. We tell the date by the calendar, the hour by the clock, but only within ourselves can we feel that time has taken wings or dropped an anchor.

"What then is time?" Augustine wonders. "If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not." The astronomer measures time by light years; the geologist, by vast cycles; the historian, by epochs and centuries. The industrialist measures time by the fiscal year; the salaried man by the month; the laborer by weekly paycheck. But for all these—and for most of us—the still more common measure of time is one day, from the early blur of fumbling out of bed in the morning until tumbling in again at night.

Too Swift Time

How long is a day?

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus asks his friends: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (The Jews reckoned from sunup till sundown.) Martha and Mary come to Jesus with news about the sickness of their brother, Lazarus. They want Jesus to return with them to their home at Bethany. His disciples, however, warn him to keep away from the country where only a short while before violent men have tried to stone him. Whose urging will Jesus obey? If he starts toward Bethany, he runs the risk of never arriving. If he keeps his distance, he hurts three of his best friends. In either case he will be doing what some of his friends think ill-advised. Thus Jesus waits for two days, and then, though Lazarus is already dead, he goes where his heart leads him—to the grave at Bethany. "If any walks in the day, he does not stumble."

In other words, the day is long enough. You may not think so, but it is. Of course the years of a man's life go whizzing out in a long toss—childhood, maturity, old age—three ricochets of the same pebble with remote circles of association crisscrossing as they ripple across memory. But a day is differen It is a natural, foreseeable, and occasionally ma ageable unit of time. "Are there not twelve hou in the day?" You will spend, invest, waste or lo this day according to your humor. It's here—an you have already wrapped up one hour in givi thanks to God. It's now—the midpoint betwee lax habits and good intentions, the only availab time in which that better life you hope for ca actually begin.

True Measure of Life

The day is—how long? "Not long enough," yo friends are likely to tell you, in case you haven just finished telling them. Poets have said the sam thing with more finesse, perhaps, but certainly wit no stronger feeling. I will spare you the punishmen of quotation, and merely observe in passing tha more iambic feet have pressed the juices out of th one theme than any other in the whole vat human thought. Even the Bible is full of lament about the shortness of time and the swiftness its flight.

> The years of our life are threescore and ten,
> or even by reason of strength fourscore;
> yet their span is but toil and trouble;
> they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Yet in our haste we skim past the encouragin truth made clear in the revelation of Jesus Chris our Lord. Life is measured not only by time bu also by love, not only by distance but also by inten tion and desire. "Are there not twelve hours in th day?" When Jesus asks this question he does no have too many hours left; he is not being frivolou or whimsical. His time is short and he knows it— but his day is long enough to go where love lead him.

The Decisive Day

As a matter of fact, the Fourth Gospel upset many of our usual standards for taking "the meas ure of man." We find here nothing at all abou Jesus' birthplace and infancy, and we catch onl a few flashbacks to the childhood interests tha shaped his early life. Of his three years' walk wit his disciples we read mostly of what appears t have happened in the last week. In that week th focus sharpens on the last few days. Generall speaking, however, in the Fourth Gospel the tim sequences overlap and the days blend into on another, as they do in your afterthoughts an

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ne. When you look back at yourself, say, over a riod of five, ten, twenty years or more, time is t stamped out in sheets with every day neatly rforated at the edges so that it can be detached m the others. Yet the *decisive* day stands out idly, unforgettably, and helps to interpret all e rest. So with Jesus Christ. One Day—the Day the Cross—lays bare the heart of God. The Day Resurrection cracks eternity wide open.

Measured by God's Love

What does this mean to you? Well, it means that d's love goes wherever you go, but gets there st. It means that he is with you always, even en you don't know what day it is yourself. The crifice of Christ was not merely "once upon a ne" but has been given "once for all." Similarly, certain few days take command in your life, and ese few days exercise a rightful authority over those that follow. Picture a wedding ceremony this chapel. A young man and women promise fore God to live together "in plenty and in want, joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health." these words are spoken sincerly, life changes that ry day. In due time God's love also brings on at bleak, indeterminate hour of semi-darkness en the baby starts tuning up with the birds. ter the honeymoon, what? The long diminuendo anticlimax? Not every day brings a festival. ank God.

For the drab, ordinary day as well, Christ makes s love available. Monday follows Sunday. You go work. God is there in the classroom, the office, or e kitchen; but as John Calvin once observed, the man mind is "slippery." It skids away from God. eorge Hedley of Mills College says that while igion has many aspects, "its ultimate fulfillment in its daily, unbroken, perduring reality in the e of every individual. Life is so daily." Tomorrow rning, then, you don't have to wake up staggered the squeeze on time. Rather you can thank God the abundance, the sufficiency, the fullness of ne. He is giving you one day more, and that's nty! Measure this new day, not by the calendar d clock, but by God's eternal love in Christ. at will put blue Monday in a different light.

Residual Deposit

I am aware of pressures that force many of us rough the week like sausage through a grinder. cording to the *Harvard Business Review*, most ung executives are "plagued by the frustrating ought that they have more work to do and more ople to see on any given day than they can satis-torily handle." Whether the executive is a clean-sk man or is snowed in with a squall of papers, tries every time-saving gimmick he can lay his nds on—push buttons, intercom systems, mem-y ticklers and the rest. Like him, his wife at home s bought "on time" several machines that guar-tee, all together, to save her at least twenty-five urs a day. Meanwhile, the children grow up nking that anything that isn't rinsed or tumbled blown or sucked at electronically is hardly worth inute. And still, for all the family, time swirls by.

But suppose that is what God makes time for—to pass by, each day leaving, however, a residual deposit in human attitudes and character! You can't "save" time, or "buy" it either. You can only live from one moment to the next, Sunday through Saturday, year by year. Then how long is a day? It is longer than you think, because it becomes an inseparable part of you, and gives you the makings for what John Henry Newman called "the habit of the soul." In one sense, therefore, while each day diminishes life, in another sense it adds to the sum of your total self. Strangely, once the day has gone, it is yours for keeps. It may be little more than a smudged carbon copy filed away and forgotten somewhere at the back of your mind, but it is there in the permanent record just the same. Whether for good or ill, today is long enough to keep the rest of your life.

Spiritual Momentum

This power of accumulation differs widely in different people. Some, apparently, gather a kind of spiritual momentum through everyday happenings, and when the decisive day comes with a sudden crash or a black-edged message, the soul's thrust carries forward and breaks through the barrier of pain, discouragement or loneliness. You have seen gentleness walk into a terrifying crossfire of events and come out unhurt; you have stood by as quiet courage faced certain death; I have watched with you, and we have agreed that such faith does not happen by accident or all at once. A gradual, often unconscious, enrichment is the result of letting Christ into the daily routine. An accumulating faith increases power by taking to heart the words of the crucified and risen Lord: "Remember, I am with you always, day by day, until the Close of the Age" (Matthew 28:20, Weymouth).

By contrast, think of those who cannot find much good in the days they have. An older man, for example, feels that time has cut him short. For him the day has already begun to slant into twilight. As the shadows inch up on him he muses: "If I'd only known! If, twenty-five years ago, I hadn't tried to be so clever. . . . But it's too late now. You can't teach an old dog new tricks." Near by, at the same time, a younger man is telling himself what sounds almost like the literal truth—that he has only one life to live, he is only young once, and at least for him tomorrow may never come. But, winding up to spring a deal he knows can't be right, he asks himself: "What difference will it make twenty-five years from now?" The older man complains of yesterday and the young man lays impossible odds on tomorrow, while both try to write off today's experiences as being either inevitable or unimportant.

As Long as Eternity

Jesus aims his question at each of us: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Time enough, but no time to waste—"*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." Whatever day sets you free in spontaneous loyalty to Jesus Christ is as long as eternity.

Traitors to Ourselves

By Franklin F. Beach

Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Matthew 26:24.

WHAT irrational acts a man will do when he sees his most cherished ideals and ambitions dashed and doomed to failure! Such a man was Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. From the bits of information scattered through the Gospels and the book of Acts we can piece together a fairly consistent story of disillusion, despair, and self-destruction. Judas was a Zealot, a member of that political party which hoped to overthrow Roman rule and to re-establish the kingdom of Israel. He was the only one of the twelve who came from the country of Judea in the south; Jesus and the other eleven were Galileans, and perhaps there was an element of jealousy herein that may have played its part in the final breach between Judas and Jesus. We can surmise that Judas was a man of business habits because he was treasurer of the group. He had definite aspirations to leadership, and a certain amount of ability must have matched his guile and craftiness. His devotion to the cause is not to be underrated regardless of personal ambition. Here was a man of some importance and means who had left his home and put all his living into the enterprise in the faith that he was giving himself generously in a cause that would fulfill his most cherished hope, the restoration of the national power of Israel.

Disillusionment

Imagine the disillusion of such a man as he witnessed the events of the Passion week unfold there in Jerusalem. On the first day of the week, which we now call Palm Sunday, there was real hope. The people had acclaimed Jesus as King and there was celebration as he came riding into the Holy City surrounded by his disciples. But the hope thus aroused was quickly destroyed by the final breach with the authorities in the Temple when Jesus chased out the money changers. And then, instead of talking inspiringly of the new Jerusalem being restored to political power, Jesus spoke almost despondently about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. He even set a date for his own death, after only two days. In the house of Simon in Bethany he allowed Mary of Bethany to waste a very expensive ointment on him when it coul have been sold for a great deal of money and give to the poor; and he gave a sharp rebuke to Juda for his practical objection. That was the immediat instance which spurred Judas, in a rage of disillu sion and resentment, to go to the chief priests an bargain to betray Jesus.

Anxiety Neurosis

What can be said of the character of such a ma who would thus prove traitor to his Master? On interpretation has it that Judas was attempting t force Jesus' hand, to make him call forth the super natural power of God, to establish the Kingdom o Heaven as a national state of Israel then and there Such interpretation would lay Judas' sin to th cause of impatience and misunderstanding. Per haps there is truth in this idea. Certainly, Juda never appreciated the profound thought of Jesu concerning the Kingdom of God; and no man of u could have the patience and forbearance of Jesus and maybe there is a great deal to be said for Judas hope of the restoration of the nation of Israel. Bu even on this level we must see that Judas' si stemmed from his pride and his selfishness, his in sistence that the reality of Jesus' mission must b just as he, Judas, conceived it to be.

If we can see that much we can see a little fur ther into the character of Judas. He was the kin of person who could and would betray his Maste Disillusion has become despair, leaving him in condition of utter frustration and fear. The fear o Judas was what a modern psychologist would ca an anxiety neurosis. Notice the pattern of that anx iety. Judas was of sufficiently strong will to insis upon his own construction of the mission. Yet, t follow Jesus initially, he must have had faith i the wisdom and integrity of his friend. Therefore when in so many words, Jesus announced his ow failure, his approaching death, and the imminen end of the world, the misgivings and the frustra tions in Judas' heart overwhelmed him and he wa mastered, not by any love for Jesus, but by th fear that gripped his soul. The fear which precipi tated the act of betrayal was the product of th character of Judas. It was not for the single act o betrayal that Jesus condemned Judas. It was be cause this act was the inevitable outcome of hi whole nature that the man fell under condemnatio It was what Judas *was*, not what he did, tha doomed him. The end result of the character o Judas was that he destroyed himself.

FRANKLIN F. BEACH *preached this sermon while he served as minister of the Christian Church in Ayden, North Carolina, in 1954-55. Concurrently he also taught New Testament at Atlantic Christian College, Wilson, North Carolina. He now serves as minister of the First Christian Church of West Memphis, Arkansas.*

All this can in no wise excuse Judas for the sin that he committed. For months he lived with Jesus and had the greatest opportunity ever offered to any man to come to a personal understanding of the Kingdom of God. But Judas did not understand and the result was that he destroyed himself physically because he had already destroyed himself morally. The betrayal of his own soul was a more certain reality than his betrayal of Jesus. In betraying Jesus he had turned against the one man in all history who could save himself and his people, and so in betraying Jesus he proved traitor to himself.

We Are All Judases

There is a real sense in which we are all Judases. We too are strong-willed characters with our own little programs for establishing the Kingdom of God as we think it ought to be. We have given a certain amount of loyalty to Christ but have reserved total commitment to him and his gospel as being an unreasonably idealistic demand upon us. We follow his program so far as we consider it practical and realistic, and we desert his cause at the point where our personal desire is threatened, not wishing to remember that Jesus had a great deal to say about sacrifice. Somewhere along the line we have collected a sin of fear, just as Judas did, that this Jesus is not entirely adequate to meet the pressure of the times. Judas was blatant with his betrayal; we are more subtle. Judas' betrayal resulted in the immediate death of a man; our betrayal results in a stagnated worship, an atrophied church, mawkish preaching and a gospel that sounds more like a children's fairy tale than a basis for victorious living.

The fear, the anxiety, and the betrayal all spread themselves through our society. Moral idealism is betrayed by the fear that crime and political corruption are inevitable. Democracy is betrayed by those who fear their own freedom and fear to let others possess it. Christ is betrayed by those who fear that he is not entirely the way, the truth and the life. Specifically, the cause of Christ is betrayed by those who fear that the local church is somehow not worthy of their immediate attention and constant devotion. And right there is where we, like Judas, become traitors to ourselves. It is this church which was constituted the body of Christ; it is this fellowship which continues the witness begun with the apostles; it is this community worship which kindles the light of the gospel in each generation. But by our much more subtle and sophisticated manner we effectively betray even our own best interests. Your church could well be the focal point of a lovely home community; and, as such, for good or ill, the extent to which you undergird the church becomes in some instances painfully evident in the community.

Our Responsibility

It is obvious that to some extent we are appealing to a utilitarian motive in the development of this thought—the idea that the best reason for doing a thing lies in its immediate usefulness to us. Well, by all means there is a higher motive for our religion than that: the idea of the pure worship of God simply because he is God, the Author of all life, who deserves our obedience in every respect. If we can set our sights high enough to keep that truth in mind, then we should not fear that we are cheapening the gospel when we say that by being true to God we are at the same time being true to our own best interests. I am not even afraid to say that we are thus being true to ourselves.

Since the ultimate goal of our Christian living is eternal life with Christ, let us see how this analogy of personal betrayal works out even here and now. We said that Jesus condemned Judas not for a mere single act but for being of such a character that would make the betrayal a natural outcome. Judas' habits of daily living and thinking so molded his character that to be a traitor was the logical result of the process. And what was Judas' hope of eternal life?

Dare we see a line being drawn from our daily habits to the formation of our characters to our places in the Kingdom of God? Surely we dare not say that these daily actions make no difference. Because, for good or ill, we shape our characters according to our will. Whatever our theology, a large part of the responsibility for what we are lies with us. If we qualify our faith in Christ by un-Christian living, we still live in the hope of God's forgiveness. But if we make that the end of the matter, can we ever forgive ourselves? To stop there is to remain forever traitors to ourselves.

Prayer of Dedication

By Robert W. Wood

Delivered in First Congregational Church, Spring Valley, New York, at dedication of R.S.V. pulpit Bible, replacing 70-year-old King James Bible

GOD of all the generations past and to come, thou who art mighty in power yet tender in love, we humby thank thee for this gift of thy Word revealed and preserved for our knowledge. Open to our understanding the wisdom of this book and grant to each of us courage to believe the good news written here. May the characters of old speak anew to our spiritual needs, may the lesson of salvation ring once more in our minds, and may the saving power of Jesus Christ come again into our lives as we use this Bible. Hallow it now and always with thy presence, O Lord, that when it lies open here the people will hear from it the very Word of God Almighty.

We are grateful for those who have preserved this book through the centuries, for those who have made new its translation, for those who make it available to us this day. Bless them all.

May the congregation ever prove worthy of this access to thy Word. Let our worthiness be measured by this book. Help us to honor it by using it.

All this we pray in the name of him whose story it tells, even Jesus Christ our Master. Amen.

What Is The Gospel?

By Fred D. Gealy

IT is, of course, both presumptuous and rash to speak to the question: What is the gospel? Presumptuous, because who can be sure that he can put the gospel in words; rash, because even if I could tell you what the gospel is you would not believe it. Few people ever have. The evidence is against it. It is too good to be true. It now seems to us incredible that Jesus should have been put to death for preaching it, or that great-hearted Paul should have been hounded from one end of the Roman empire to the other for declaring it. Yet, stop and think: is not this our common historic behavior pattern with reference to the gospel? Nor, strangely enough, is the gospel any easier to believe after nineteen centuries. In fact, it seems more difficult to believe today than it has ever been.

The New Age Has Come

I do not need to tell you that the word "gospel" is a great and Christian word, a stone, if you will, picked up out of the common quarry of the Greek language, and made a cornerstone of a new faith. "Good news," it means, glad tidings of great joy. Therefore, how radiant with faith are the pages of the New Testament, how incandescent with hope, how warm and enlivening with affection and love! And herein is the essential unity of the New Testament: there is one gospel. Jesus and Paul, I would affirm, preached the same gospel—and this in spite of differences of language, form of presentation, and social milieu.

We may then briefly characterize the gospel in the New Testament:

The time is fulfilled. The hour comes and now is. In the fullness of time God sent forth his Son. In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things. Every page of the New Testament insists that in Christ, God has broken into history with unparalleled power, splitting it in two. The strife is now o'er; the battle is done; the victory of life is won. For, swift as lightning, Satan has fallen. With sure confidence and irresistible power Jesus has entered the strong man's house and bound him. With authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. What, indeed, do the encounters with demons in the New Testament mean but that the war in heaven is won? What do the healings and resurrections mean but that the new age, the age of wholeness, of righteousness, of life is here? What is redemption *from* if not from sin and death? What is it *to* if not to righteousness and life? And that salvation is now a reality could hardly be better expressed than in Simeon's words set in so impressive a context: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

The New Man

As befits the New Age, God in Christ creates a New Man. Christian man is a *new* man, a miracle man. He has been reborn. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew. He saved us . . . in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal. Rebirth means re-creation. If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. Christian man has already died and has been raised from the dead. We were buried with him into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. We have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer we but Christ who lives in us. We have died and our lives are hid with Christ in God. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places.

As Christ, like Melchizedek, is a new creation: without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, so Christian man, having put off the old man, in Christ the second Adam, becomes a new man; having died, he now for the first time lives.

The New Community

If the New Age requires a new Man, both require a New Community. Hardly had Jesus begun his ministry until he started gathering together a people of God: the four, the twelve, the seventy, the one hundred twenty, the three thousand, the number added day by day until the myriads from every tribe and tongue and people and nation had pressed in to be made a kingdom. The New Community, the church, is likewise a miracle community. It is God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist, who creates a people out of no people.

FRED D. GEALY *is professor of New Testament and church music at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas. His sermon, prepared for a chapel service of the seminary and published in the Perkins* Journal, *is used here by permission.*

Since Christian man is a miracle man, any man may become a member of the New Community in whom the miracle of faith may be worked. You do not have to be a good man to become a New Man. Publican or sinner, Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian, slave or free—these previous conditions of servitude do not matter. For there is nothing to which a man can be enslaved from which he has not already been set free. Our Christian freedom is that though many, we are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. A community in *agape,* in love, we are free to serve each other in the communion of saints, in the *koinonia of the Spirit.*

A New World

But even more astonishing: the Isaianic prophecy of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth is even now taking place. The New Man and the New Community are being set in a cosmic context. The world itself is being renovated to provide a suitable setting for the New Age. What are the "nature" miracles, the healings, the resurrections in the Gospels intended to mean but that the creation itself is being set free from its bondage to decay and is being prepared to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God? "Behold, I make all things new" is the bold projection of a spiritual certainty that the great catharsis, the palingenesis, the cosmic renovation is even now taking place. The end is near when death, "the last enemy," will be destroyed and Christ will deliver the kingdom to God after destroying "every rule and every authority and power."

Fantastic, isn't it, this good news, this gospel in the New Testament? You know it isn't so, don't you? You know too that all things have continued as they were from the beginning, don't you? No New Age has really come, has it? And look at yourself. Are you a New Man? And what about the church of which *you* are a member, in which *you* work, which *you* see about you in any town? Is it really a *koinonia* in *agape?* No, alas, the world is not new; only perhaps old and tired; it's just like it was, you know that.

How many times in these recent tumultuous years have I heard older people say, "Things are so uncertain, I don't see what young people nowadays have to live for." Nothing to live for? Well—there's the gospel.

N. B.

PROTESTANTISM cannot afford *not* to be scrutinized. When the Protestant and the skeptic part company, Protestantism is judged and found wanting by the Protestant principle—that only God is infallible.—*David Wesley Soper,* Epistle to the Skeptics *(New York: Association Press).**

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Discouraged Church

By S. Burman Long

Waldo Congregational, Brockton, Mass.

NOW a certain mayor of a city, wishing to justify his office and his city, said, "What can be done about that dilapidated church building on B Street?"

Now a church on B Street had fallen into decay; it had spiritual scars of jealousy and open wounds of revenge that had crippled it, and no spiritual penicillin or industrial automation had been prescribed to heal its ailments.

And by chance some clubs, lodges and social organizations in the community had members who passed by daily. Some laughed in scorn and others ridiculed the church on B Street as they passed on their way to work.

And likewise youth organizations of the community and some adult social groups also said, "Now we will have a place to meet, and we will use the church buildings and will make merry among ourselves." And they proceeded to add to the dilapidation of the weather-beaten church building.

But a factory moved into the community with managers, foremen and many laborers with families. And when they saw the church they began using it to worship God. They divested it of sectarian bias, healed the scars with kindness and forgiveness, and bound the wounds with Christian love, and joined the spire in pointing all to the righteousness of God, so that the clubs, lodges, social organizations, youth groups and adult social groups using the church building rejoiced together and began to work at repairing the damages, repainting the colorless areas so that now neither adult neglect or youth delinquency is mentioned, because all are busy doing the abundance of things that a righteous community will do.

Which of these groups was neighbor to the church on B Street? The answer: the factory management, foremen, workers who worshiped and joined with farmers and all others in worship in the church on B Street.

"Go, and do thou likewise!"

N. B.

"OH, child, child, child, when shall I have washed the nurse and the grandam and the priest and the soothsayer out of your soul? Do you think the Divine Nature [cares for us]—why, it's profane, ridiculous. You might as well say the universe itched or the Nature of Things sometimes tippled in the wine cellar."—*C. S. Lewis,* Till We Have Faces *(New York: Harcourt, Brace).**

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Preached at Komaki American Air Base Chapel in English, October 1956

'Present Your Bodies as a Living Sacrifice'

By Ichiro Akishge

Romans 12:1-8.

MANY years ago there was a famous cabinet minister of foreign affairs in Tokyo who once invited some foreign ambassadors and their wives for a party. When it was time for dinner, the minister spoke to them loudly as follows: "Open door, eat next room." I suppose he meant to tell them to "sit down in the next room and let us eat our dinner." I will speak to you like this well-known minister from now on. Please do not eat rooms or houses. This is my first time I have ever spoken in English.

Thank you very much for your contribution of 18,432 yen to my church. I have already spent it for repairs on our church building, which is very old. I have told all the church members what you have done for us again and again.

Founded Sixty Years Ago

My church was situated next door to the city office, but because of widening the street we had to move the church to the present location last spring. At that time we bought an old house and put it on the new lot.

The Komaki church was originally a Methodist Church, and now it belongs to the United Church of Japan. It was started in the home of a Christian more than sixty years ago. Every week a preacher came from the present Nagoya Central Church. In the past, for many years, our faithful forerunners suffered severely on account of their faith. Sometimes policemen came to the church to stop violence of the persecutors. In those days a school teacher was made to retire from his school because he was a Christian.

The kindergarten which belongs to our church was opened twenty-four years ago by a Canadian missionary.

I'm very sorry to say that in spite of such a long history and persevering persecution, progress of our church has been slow in this heathen country. However, I am looking forward to the day when God himself will work in the heart of all the people in this sinful town. For our work, I hope you will pray every day.

I am now 44 years old, having three sons and two daughters. When I was about 10 years old a Sunday school was opened in my town which is near the famous hot springs of Beppu in Kyushu. Miss Whitehead came to my town, driving her car herself, bringing some Japanese girls to teach at the Sunday school. I was the most earnest boy of all in it.

Training for the Ministry

I was baptized by Mr. Demaree at the age of 15.

Since my parents had not very much money, I did not have the opportunity of studying at high school. So, after graduating from the primary school, I spent my younger days as an office boy, a shop boy and did many other things until I entered the theological department of Kwansei Gakuin University as an irregular student at the age of 21.

For a student who had very little money, getting through the five-year course at the university was very difficult. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my school days there very much.

During those days I was almost completely supported by American missionaries. They were Mr. and Mrs. Demaree, Dr. and Mrs. Haden, Mrs. Rumble and many others. They are all in the U.S. now, except two of them who have been called to their heavenly home. Those who are still living often write me.

Service in Japanese Army

After graduation from the seminary I spent one year working with an American missionary in Shikoku, and the next year I was transferred to Manchuria for work with the Japanese there. After my pastoral work of five and a half years there, I was called to the colors. I served my country in the army for two and a half years, and was in Manchuria and Korea during that time.

As soon as the war was over I came back to my country and was honorably discharged from the army. My wife, mother and two children, who were in Manchuria, came home two years later than I. One of our children, who was only one year old, died in Manchuria during the terrible days when the Red army was trying to take Manchuria.

When I came back to Japan my first

ICHIRO AKISHGE *is pastor of Komaki Church, Higashi Machi, Komaki, Aichi-Ken, Japan.*

work was to establish an orphanage, which I did with a friend of mine in Shimane Prefecture. It took nearly one year to complete the building.

Next, I was appointed pastor of a small church on a small island of Yamaguchi Prefecture. As soon as I reached my new church I received a telegram informing me that my family had reached Japan safely from Soviet-occupied Manchuria.

Help from American Friends

It is impossible for me to describe how my family and I suffered during those days. It was very hard to get food and other materials for living in this small island. In those days of terrible inflation and material shortage after the war, every day I went to the seashore and mountains to find food and firewood. I received a small salary from the church, which was not enough to support my family. So in order to make more money I worked on roads and fields as a coolie.

We thank God who saved us from starvation in the same way as he did Elijah in the Old Testament. Our heavenly Father gave me numberless boxes of food, clothing and many kinds of living materials through the hands of the above-mentioned missionaries. I suppose there has never been any other pastor in this country who has been given such abundant presents from your country. The coat, shirt, trousers, shoes and necktie which I am wearing now all came from the United States. Sometimes I have received cash.

As I have told you, from my boyhood to the present day I have been able to study and live through the kindness of American missionaries. They have helped me like my parents. So I have always believed that American people were all saints, like Peter or John, and your country was heaven on earth, because you have sent us such kind missionaries. I myself would be happy if I had been born in America. I can't tell you how grieved I was at the news of the Pearl Harbor attack.

American Servicemen Criticized

However, I am very sorry to say that since I came to this base town I have been forced to give up my heartfelt admiration for your country, because of the immorality on the part of a number of your soldiers, especially sex immorality.

One night a drunken soldier came to my house with a girl. He was smoking. And other nights two couples of soldiers and Japanese girls also came to my church. They asked me to perform a marriage ceremony for them. Of course I refused to do as they asked me because I did not know them, and I explained to them what the church is. I think the church is the Holy of Holies where God's word should be preached. The marriage ceremony is nothing like as important as that. We welcome only those who repent from their sins, and believe in God and his Son Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and wish to become sons of God through faith, and are baptized in Jesus' name.

I told the immoral soldiers and girls to go to their chaplains or any other church and ask them to perform their marriage ceremonies. Lastly, I said to them: "Bring me no more such earthly affairs and make me not troubles."

Please tell me how to answer when children ask me, "Why do American soldiers walk with gaily dressed girls arm in arm?" or "Why are American servicemen living next door with girls in spite of [the fact that] they have good houses in the base?"

Do not forget your old American homes where your wives and mothers have been waiting for your homecoming with pure hearts and bodies.

Please tell your friends that I will welcome any of you, but please do not bring a street girl. And also tell them that our Japanese Christians do not have the custom of drinking and smoking.

We Japanese are as responsible as the immoral soldiers. There are those of us who make a fortune off this shameful business. And some of our girls do not know the value of chastity. For this we are very much ashamed.

All Brethren in Christ

Dear friends, please excuse me for speaking so frankly, because we are brothers in the name of our Lord. I believe you are representatives and ambassadors of glorious American history. The fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the theology of Jonathan Edwards should still be in your hearts. Do not think that they are only classical literature of days gone by.

In the next place, the church is the place where people help each other. In other words, the church is a holy place of friendship. Those who are sorrowing and are happy gather at the church and share their experiences. I am very fond of the Greek word *koinonia* which is translated "Christian friendship" in our sense. I think there is much differentiation between "friendship" and "Christian friendship" in your language.

There are no differences between the sexes, ages, jobs and races in the church. We are all brethren in Christ. We are the same race in heaven. We should help each other and cooperate to build up the Kingdom of God in this sinful world.

Lastly, I say again that I thank you so much for your contribution and for this opportunity of preaching. You are also welcome to come to our church any time, though we can't talk freely to each other.

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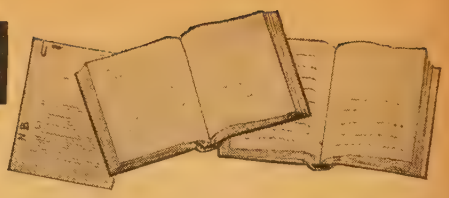

GO into any city, town or hamlet in the U. S. today and you will be struck by the tremendous number of lodges, service clubs, fraternal orders and secret societies that it boasts. Some of them claim no function at all beyond horseplay and good times. Others actually do a great deal of service work for numerous good causes. But in one respect most of these clubs and orders are alike: they are symptoms of the members' unconscious need to belong to meaningful social groups; they are the rugged individualist's answer to the deep hunger of his spirit for some association with other people in purposeful activity.—*William Muehl,* Politics for Christians *(New York: Association Press).**

WE have to work as if everything depends upon us, and we have to pray and trust as if everything depends upon God, and only when we hold together the two apparently contradictory sides of the matter do we comprehend the richness of the Christian doctrine of grace.—*Jack Finegan,* Beginnings in Theology *(New York: Association Press).**

THE good life is not easily achieved. It is the result of a lifetime of dreaming, hoping, striving, accepting, adjusting and achieving. Faith in God, in others, in life itself helps us in those moments of doubt when our faith in ourselves is shaken by the realities of existence. But without the moments of despair, our ultimate triumphs would be robbed of their deepest satisfactions.—*Ralph G. Eckert,* Sex Attitudes in the Home *(New York: Association Press).**

WE are beginning to realize that the Christian ministry is to the *whole* man, and must include the welfare of his body as well as his eternal interests. We can no longer be content to preach a gospel of hope for the future as a substitute for the effort of adjusting things in the present, or as a compensation for failure to live rightly in this life.—*A. Graham Ikin,* New Concepts of Healing *(New York: Association Press).**

DE VALERA achieved power with an old political principle, well established through the years . . . there are always more poor voters in a country than there are rich. With universal suffrage a smart politician is wise to appeal to the poor.—*Leonard Patrick O'Connor Wibberley,* The Trouble with the Irish *(New York: Henry Holt).**

WE live in the day when teaching and preaching are provisional. The church itself is provisional. A ministry, a building, a Christian social action program—these are temporary activities, to be done as well as possible, but to be done always with that humility which comes from knowing that "The End" is written over them. The provisional church is the *anticipation* of heaven. But this is something worth being. It is something worth being in, for within it we may have a foretaste of the eternal community that is our certain hope.—*George Laird Hunt,* Rediscovering the Church *(New York: Association Press).**

ONE can only sympathize with Nehru's contention that the basic need of modern India is a century of atheism, for the Hindu idea of God and the Hindu caste system seem to stand or fall together. They tend to sanctify what is, and thus prevent the coming of what ought to be. If Hinduism is the only religion available to man, it is possible that man cannot afford religion. Any religious preoccupation which ex-

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udes the better and more in this world -for all men—seems a form of blas- nemy wearing the robes of piety.—*avid Wesley Soper,* Epistle to the keptics *(New York: Association ress).**

THE fundamental positive motive for toleration is a recognition of the uth that religious conflict is not just a uisance but is a sin. It is sinful be- use it arouses the wild beast in hu- an nature. Religious persecution, too, sinful because no one has a right to y to stand between another human ul and God. Every soul has a right to y to commune with God in God's and is soul's way; and the particular way oncerns none but God and the particu- r soul in question.—*Arnold Toynbee,* n Historian's Approach to Religion *New York: Oxford).**

MANY a chronological adult simply transfers his infantile love for his arents to the object of his later affec- ons. She (or he) is regarded as the ost beautiful, most intelligent, most harming creature in the world. She is ot loved for what she is but for what er lover wants her to be. She is, as the other is to the infant, simply an ex- nsion of his own ego. He must believe at she is so remarkable, because only ich a creature is worthy of his love. lusion is the standard diet of infantile ve. It is, as the poets say, blind. It is so preoccupied with its needs and wants, its feelings and reactions, that it cannot see the beloved at all. . . . Cupid appears appropriately enough in diapers.—*William Graham Cole,* Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis *(New York, Oxford).**

NOW mark yet again the cruelty of the gods. There is no escape from them into sleep or madness, for they can pursue you into them with dreams. Indeed you are then most at their mercy. The nearest thing we have to a defence against them (but there is no real defence) is to be very wide awake and sober and hard at work, to hear no music, never to look at earth or sky, and (above all) to love no one.—*C. S. Lewis,* Till We Have Faces *(New York: Harcourt, Brace).**

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The Church

WHEN we attend faithfully, it is made strong, and we hear the eternal Word of God speaking to our hearts.

When we do its tasks, its mission of blessing is accomplished and the labor enriches our lives.

When we give of our wealth, it prospers and generosity is built into our souls.

If we neglect its assembly, God's truth is not heard.

If we let others carry the burden, we never know the rich reward of lives touched and changed by our hand and voice.

If we fail in its support, we miss the largeness of life that comes from freely giving.—*Hillyer H. Straton, First Baptist Church, Malden, Mass.*

Pulpit Calendar

Mar. 3—The Transfiguration (also Aug. 6).
Mar. 6—Ash Wednesday.
Mar. 8—World Day of Prayer.
Mar. 10—1st Sunday in Lent.
Mar. 17—2nd Sunday in Lent.
Mar. 24—3rd Sunday in Lent.
Mar. 25—The Annunciation.
Mar. 31—4th Sunday in Lent. One Great Hour of Sharing.
Apr. 7—Passion Sunday.
Apr. 14—Palm Sunday.
Apr. 14-20—Holy Week.
Apr. 18—Maundy Thursday.
Apr. 19—Good Friday.
Apr. 21—Easter.
Apr. 28—Christian Higher Education Sunday.
May 5—2nd Sunday after Easter.
May 6-12—National Family Week.
May 12—Festival of the Christian Home (Mother's Day).
May 19—4th Sunday after Easter.
May 26—Rural Life Sunday.
May 30—Ascension Day. Memorial Day. Day of Prayer for Missions.

(Pulpit Calendar lists dates in the calendar of the Christian year and other observances of national or religious significance.)

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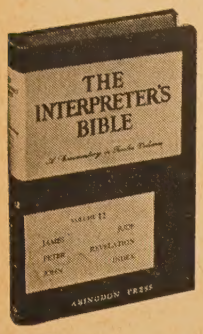

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Books Preachers Are Reading

THE MENTOR BOOK OF RELIGIOUS VERSE. *Edited by Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska. New American Library, 50 cents.*

MEISTER ECKHART: A MODERN TRANSLATION. *By Raymond Bernard Blakney. Harper, $1.45.*

WORSHIP. *By Evelyn Underhill. Harper, $1.75.*

PURITY OF HEART. *By Soren Kierkegaard. Harper, $1.25.*

THE PRAYERS OF KIERKEGAARD. *By Perry D. LeFevre. University of Chicago Press, $3.50.*

PATHWAYS OF THE INNER LIFE. *Edited by Georges Barrois. Bobbs Merrill, $5.00.*

LENT is not the only time in the year when Christians attend to the devotional treasures in Christian literature. But Lent is the special season for special attention to those bright literary sparks struck off flaming or molten souls. Leaping across centuries these are the little fires that still can light large fires in spirits set open before them. In poetry and prayer and heated prose, devotional literature heightens our devotion. No wonder we look to it more than ever in Lent.

This year the publishers of paperbacks and pocket books have cleared an inexpensive way to rich new caches of this treasure. The list suggested here barely scratches the possibilities, but if it sets Christian sights on the relatively unexplored, it will suffice.

Nothing, at this late date, can be wearier than another anthology of religious verse. Who, by this time does not know every steady beat and repeated rhyme of the overcollected poetry of Christendom? Poetry properly stirs surprise and wonder; the Christian poetry we usually get in our books of selections has little of either left. Even what we don't recognize we could have anticipated. But now comes the new Mentor Book. Surprises? To the point of shock. Wonder? Open-mouthed, at times. The poems are as new as today: Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, a college student. The poems are as old as Ancient Carol and Anonymous. But hardly any of them have been in this kind of book before. If you like your meanings obvious and your rhymes rigid and your rhythms metronomic, then you had better steer clear of many of these pages. But if you are eager for the sudden flash of unsuspected insight, the start of unfamiliar beauty, the dare to dig, the sting of astringent freshness—this book is for you.

Scholars will want the inexpensively reprinted works of Meister Eckhart even if devotional shoppers should mistakenly overlook this new Harper Torchbook. In the hard-cover edition this has been for some time the standard English version of the important works. Now in the sturdy and handsome paper-back version of this series, the book is an extraordinary bargain. You will not be sorry if you add it to the Lenten list for devotional attention this spring. Here is a mystic, but a peculiarly brainy one, thinking and writing raptly, but rarely fuzzing off into raptures.

Another classic, though a contemporary one, is Evelyn Underhill's famous study of "the nature and principles of Worship, and the chief forms in which they find expression in Christianity." This is not itself devotional literature, perhaps, but it will help enormously with setting the devotional masterpieces from the various branches of Christendom in their respective contexts, historical, theological and ecclesiastical. Collateral reading for Lent that will add to the understanding and appreciation of much devotional and ecumenical reading that you will do in the rest of any year.

Soren Kierkegaard continues near the center of theological interest, and is still as much a mystery as ever. Has anyone ever been so thoroughly ransacked, in both his person and his productions, and remained so enigmatic? This year two selections from his work offer rich devotional possibilities, and close clues to his character. In Douglas Steere's translation of *Purity of the Heart Is to Will One Thing* you have Kierkegaard operating at the sizzling center of his intensity. Here, as directly, pointedly, inescapably as anywhere in his work, Soren Kierkegaard forces the question of what it means to become and to continue becoming a Christian. He burns through every subterfuge, defense, alibi. This is a recommended beginning book for those who may not yet have read Kierkegaard for themselves —and no man ever lived on whom you could less take another man's word. This is also the book for those to return to who have read all the other books and need a lead on what they are all getting at.

In the same category is the somewhat costlier but very beautiful book of Kierkegaard's prayers, selected from the whole body of his other work by Perry LeFevre. It is one of the points of the excellent interpretation of Kierkegaard which fills the second half of the book that his devotional passion gives us a clearer line on his whole life and work than does any other element in his character or thought. Certainly the striking prayers carry the worship of a man whose whole self was bound up in what he was doing and thinking. Prayers are not to be judged by their ideas, I suppose, but homileticians will not be offended to find eminently preachable points in some of the lines.

Since we broke the cost barrier with that last, we can finish this list with

>rges Barrois' scholarly and deeply selection from the witness of thirty-ee "great believers." Each claims ie encounter with the realest real, the stories and effects of those en-nters are told by the sensitive be-ers themselves. Dr. Barrois' various roductions set the context and de-op the content of each selection. The ılt is a rich and rewarding contact h big hearts and busy minds, all their best, all apparently getting ough. T.A.G.

ESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED. *By Clarence W. Kerr. Cowman, 2.50.*

ETING LIFE ON HIGHER LEVELS. *By Hunter Beckelhymer. Abingdon, 1.75.*

E EBONY JEWEL BOX. *By F. Paul McConkey. Eerdmans, $2.50.*

E TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND. *By Charles L. Allen. Revell, $2.00.*

SCRIPTION FOR ANXIETY. *By Leslie). Weatherhead. Abingdon, $2.50.*

HERE is a tendency among many religious popularizers to treat the ristian faith as an emotional crutch a personality miracle drug. Pseudo-chological books with religious over-es abound, purporting to show us v to be reverent though repressed, stic though manic, saintly though izoid.

)ther popularizations shy clear of chological involvement and work on principle of self-help. Think posi-thoughts, fight the good fight, love ryone, and you're bound to become utiful, popular and a business suc-s to boot. How these things are to pen is never quite explained except t Jesus and "having faith" are some-v involved.

Certain critics have maintained that se books must have *some* merit. Too ny people have been helped by them all to be utterly worthless, they say. ually, such books not only lack it but most of them, in overlooking fact that man's function on earth is raise God more than it is to carve an anxiety-free, physically com-able niche for himself (in God's ne or not!), negate both the glory mystery of our Lord's life.

For instance, in stressing the need prayer, Clarence W. Kerr in *Ques-s That Must Be Answered* recounts tale of a woman who had little ney to spend on her children's hes. Each time she went shopping prayed that the Lord would help find a bargain or two. According to story, he inevitably did. Kerr fur-tells us about Dwight Moody ght in a frightful storm at sea. He plicated God for his safety, then t quietly to sleep, knowing that if ship reached New York, it meant ne; if it reached the bottom of the it meant heaven.

there any such hard-and-fast, se-and-effect relationship in prayer? s not some certainty of heaven nd suspiciously prideful? And what of the higher forms of prayer, those that *ask* nothing, that simply adore God? There is no mention of these. At best, Kerr urges that we cooperate with God; otherwise we will never be able to "improve our dispositions" or "overcome our bad habits." This is a worrisomely petty function for the Lord of the Incarnation.

In *Meeting Life on Higher Levels,* Hunter Beckelhymer refuses to set the discussion so low. He wishes to aid those who "seek help for day-to-day living in the realm of ideas, attitudes and spirit." What is needed? Only that we accept ourselves, focus on God, forget our troubles and push onward and upward. A simple enough task. The trouble is that anyone really capable of doing these things would hardly need to read the book.

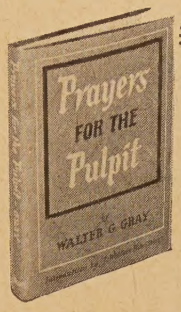
Two recent collections of sermons, *The Ebony Jewel Box* by F. Paul McConkey and *The Touch of the Master's Hand* by Charles L. Allen, carry on this same tradition. Each deals with an important topic (without Christ, life is despair; and Christ's miracles for today), but both skitter too much along too many surfaces. It is untruthful and unwise to describe an iceberg only in terms of what projects above the water.

Of course, you can plunge in too deep, also—so deep that readers lacking the special knowledge of the authors can destroy themselves in an attempt to follow. This is phrased otherwise: you don't allow a child to handle a loaded revolver. To a certain extent Leslie D. Weatherhead in *Prescription for Anxiety* does just this. Occasionally he so oversimplifies his psychological observations, such as the necessity for preserving our differences, or over-stresses the mystic elements of life that a confused person—the proposed reader of the volume—would only be further confounded if not actually frightened.

It seems to me that all five of these books share one error. All are based on the premise that if you reduce a complex psychological (or theological) idea to terms simple enough for even the most casual reader to grasp, it will inevitably cure such a reader of all his emotional (or religious) difficulties. By the same token one would have to expect recovery in a patient fed the simple component parts of a complicated drug but never the medicine itself. This is, of course, patent nonsense—psychological, theological and medical!

We need to carry the problem further back. There is no need to divorce religion and psychiatry for, as several leading psychiatrists have maintained, psychiatry and religion are engaged in essentially the same activity—the salvation of men through love—albeit their methods differ drastically. If these five authors and their kin fail of religious or psychological soundness it is because they have violated the rule of order. They have focused too much of their attention on the love of man for his sanity, not enough on his love of God.—*Robert H. Glauber, Editor,* Beloit Poetry Journal.

PRAYERS FOR THE PULPIT



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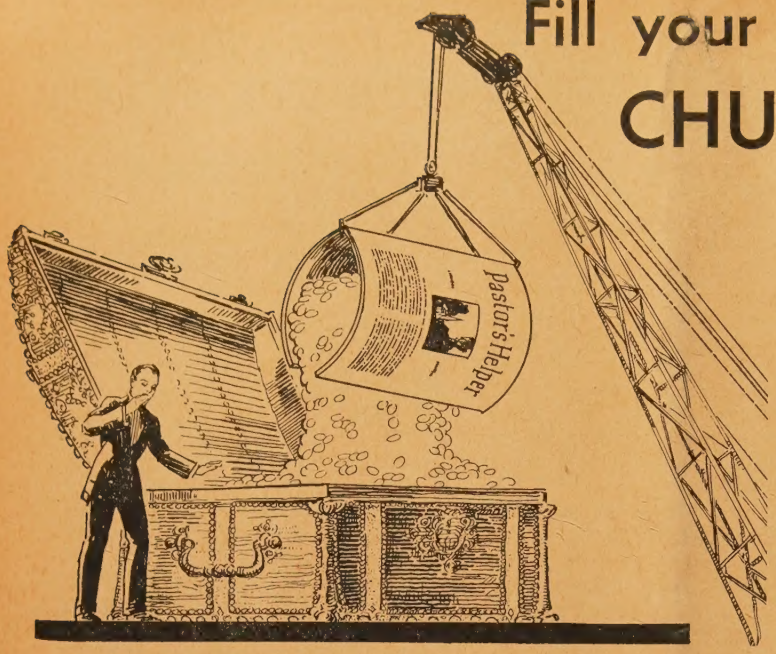

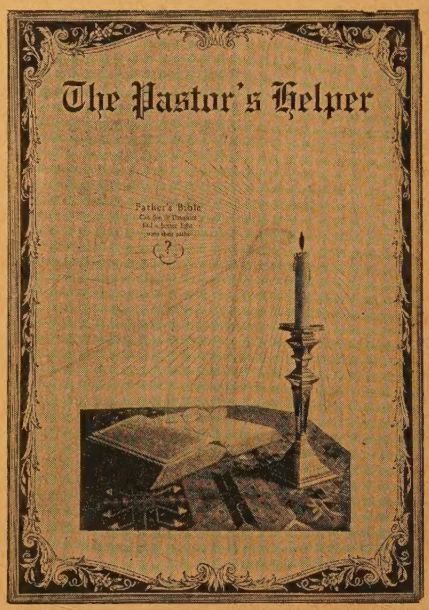

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